Gawain Jones

how to beat the Sicilian defence

an anti-Sicilian repertoire for White

EVERYMAN CHESS

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Introduction

Welcome to this Anti-Sicilian repertoire. The Sicilian is Black's most common response to 1 e4 and a real headache for most players. Of course we can try the Open Sicilian, but this requires a thorough knowledge of each different Sicilian variation, as well as keeping on top of all the theoretical developments. If you are a Sicilian player yourself, you will also realize another practical problem: the lines of the Open Sicilian require so much knowledge and experience that players on the black side spend their whole lives debating different move order nuances on internet forums and studying new games so that they are very well prepared for their particular variation. Thus a Dragon player will have played hundreds of games in the Yugoslav Attack and understands the resulting positions, but a white player also has to contend with the Najdorf, the Sveshnikov, the Classical, the Kan, the Taimanov and many other lines. However, often those who employ the Sicilian as Black have failed to look at the sidelines in any depth.

In this book I am suggesting lines that promise White good strategic chances. I've also tried to keep Black's counterplay under wraps, which will really frustrate the average Sicilian player. Of course I have also made sure that we have attacking chances of our own. With this repertoire you will be able to dictate the nature of play yourself and with greater understanding in and greater experience of the resulting structures, your results should be very promising.

The Structure of this Book

I am recommending a repertoire with 3 ♗b5 against 2...d6 and 2...♘c6. The Moscow Variation (1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+) has a reputation as a route to drawish positions, but as I prove in this book, White can play these positions for a win and its reputation is ill deserved. A lot of Sicilian players really dislike playing the arising positions as they are deprived of their typical counterplay.

The Rossolimo Variation (1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5) is the most theoretical part of the repertoire and has been discussed in countless super-grandmaster games. I advocate taking on c6 and playing against Black's structural weaknesses on the queenside. In both the Rossolimo and the Moscow Variation we will be utilizing many ideas of the Russian Grandmaster Sergei Rublevsky.

Against 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 it is harder to find a good Anti-Sicilian, but I like my suggestion of the King's Indian Attack. The lines examined in the two chapters on it are more ideas-based than theoretical, but have served me well for the past ten years. Finally, I wrap up my coverage of the Sicilian from White's perspective with a look at Black's minor lines.

Acknowledgements

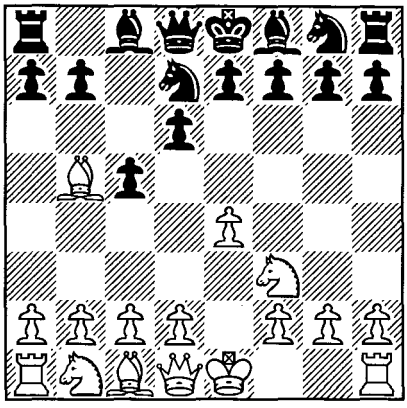
This book would not have seen the light of day had it not been for the help of many people. First of all, thanks to John Emms and Richard Palliser for help with the technical side of the book and providing reference material. I wish to thank all the members of the Wellington Chess Scene, particularly Lin, Ross, Alan, Maria and Bill. Without them my sojourn in New Zealand would have been a lot less enjoyable. An extra thanks to Bill for his book suggestions, his software and most enjoyable coaching sessions. Finally, I wish to thank my fiancée Sue who put up with my long hours writing this book, while I was fighting against the deadline(s) and wasn't much help doing anything else. She also helped out with the initial editing of the book, allowing you, the reader, to see this book before 2012!

I hope you will find this repertoire useful. I have certainly had fun finding some new ideas in order to cause Black problems. Indeed, I hope you manage to employ my new ideas before Sicilian players check the book too!

Gawain Jones
London,
March 2011

Chapter One
Moscow Variation: 3...♘d7

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘d7



This is Black's most aggressive response to the Moscow Variation. Black wishes to keep his light-squared bishop for dynamic counterchances. However, this approach slows down Black's development and thus is a risky strategy. Normally we will capture on d7 when forced to by ...a6, leaving Black with the two bishops, but we'll use our lead in development to create an early initiative.

In Games 1-4, 8 and 10, we reach a Maroczy bind structure in which we hope to profit from having exchanged the light-squared bishop. This is due to the fact that the bishop will no longer be hemmed in by its own pawns on c4 and e4. Game 5 sees Magnus Carlsen allow the exchange on c5 when we can take control of the useful e5-square for the white knight. Although Black eventually triumphs, he had rather an awkward position out of the opening. In Game 6 Black takes a rather poisonous pawn leaving White with a huge initiative, while Game 7 sees Black lose further time in the opening trying to keep a solid position. The structure in this game is different to those seen in the rest of the chapter, but is one in which White has good chances for an advantage. Finally, in Game 9 we see what happens when Black opts for a Dragon set-up.

Repertoire Outline

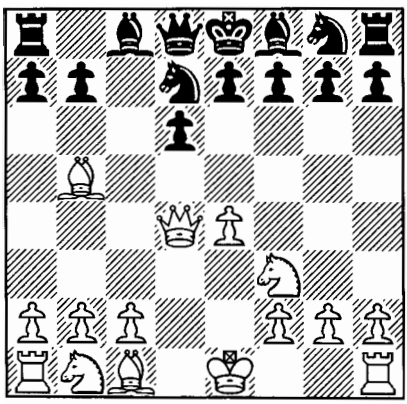
3...♘d7 4 d4 ♘gf6

This has been Black's most common response and was played by the strongest chess player of all time, Garry Kasparov amongst many others. It will be featured in

Games 6 to 10. Black also has:

a) 4...a6 has to be taken seriously as it was the choice of the very strong, young Norwegian, Magnus Carlsen. After 5 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 6 dxc5 Black has a choice: either to cede control over e5 or else lose time with his queen. This is seen in Game 5.

b) 4...cxd4 is a very logical move and often transposes to the mainline after 5 ♕xd4 ♘f6 6 0-0. Instead of 5...♘f6, Black might try one of the following:



b1) With 5...a6 Black immediately puts the question to White's bishop, but this leaves him falling further behind in development. Azeri GM Teimour Radjabov is the highest-rated to have played this way – see Games 1 and 2.

b2) 5...e5 sees Black taking steps to fight in the centre with a typical Najdorf set-up, but he has to be very careful that the hole on d5 can be acceptably defended. This is examined in Game 3.

b3) 5...e6 is quite rare before developing the king's knight. This is covered in Game 4 together with Black's rare replies of 5...♕a5+, 5...h6, as played by the leading Russian Grandmaster Peter Svidler, and 5...♕c7, as attempted by the top American Grandmaster Hikaru Nakamura.

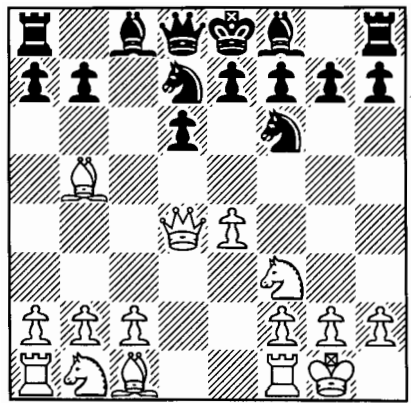
5 0-0! cxd4

Black's most common response, ignoring the pawn on offer. Alternatively:

a) Taking the pawn with the 5...♘xe4?! of Game 6 is very risky, but has been played by a few grandmasters, the highest-rated being the American Alex Yermolinsky.

b) 5...a6 is quite fashionable and has even been tried by Garry Kasparov. Black gains the bishop-pair, but allows White a lead in development and enough time to gain space in the centre, as we'll see in Game 7.

6 ♕xd4



Now:

a) 6...a6 is another move which has tested by the former World Champion, but Game 8 shows the highly-creative Ukrainian, Vassily Ivanchuk, blow Kasparov off the board.

b) 6...g6 was attempted by Vassily Ivanchuk himself. If we allow Black enough time to develop sensibly then he will have a good position, so we need to seize the initiative immediately – see Game 9.

c) 6...e5 is the most common path. Black immediately takes steps to fight back in the centre. The position is similar to Game 3 and it is important to familiarize yourself with this set-up. This is featured in Game 10, the final game of the chapter.

Game 1
A.Muzychuk-A.Giri
Wijk aan Zee 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘d7 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♕xd4 a6 6 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 7 c4!?

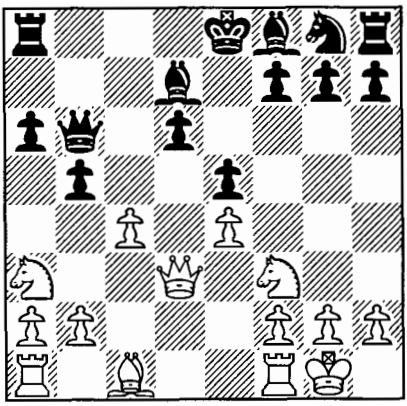
A somewhat unusual move, but it has Sergey Tiviakov's stamp of approval. The idea is simple to comprehend: we want to play a Maroczy bind structure. The light-squared bishop is blocked in by the c4- and e4-pawns in the normal Maroczy bind, so it makes sense first to exchange it.

7 0-0 ♖c8 8 c4 is looked at in the next game.

7...♗g4

Considering that the Dutch prodigy subsequently decides not to take on f3 this move must be deemed a mistake. Otherwise:

a) 7...e5 8 ♕d3 b5 is similar to the following game. Now 9 ♘a3 (9 ♘c3 also looks sensible here, as d5 is already a big hole) 9...♕b6 10 0-0 and then:



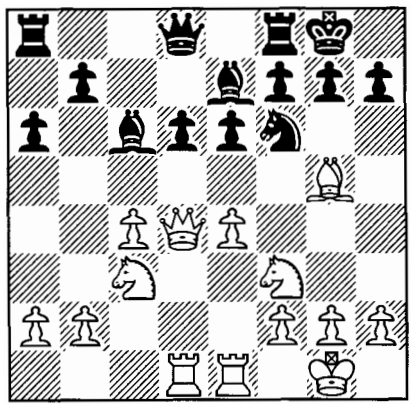
a1) The immediate 10...♘f6 would be a mistake as 11 ♗g5 is rather awkward to deal with: for example, 11...♗e7 12 ♗xf6! (the a3-knight is a long way from d5, but d6 is still a problem) 12...♗xf6 (or 12...gxf6 13 cxb5 axb5 14 ♘c2 and the knight has some juicy squares in sight) 13 ♖fd1 when Black has problems defending d6, as 13...♗e7? fails to 14 ♘xe5!.

a2) 10...♗e7 is Vigorito's suggestion, but I think 11 ♗g5! is still strong with the plan of focusing on the weak d6-pawn.

a3) 10...h6 was seen in S.Tiviakov-V.Babula, Dresden 2007, when 11 ♘h4!? looks interesting: for instance, 11...g6 (or 11...♘f6 12 ♘f5 ♕c6 13 f3 g6 14 ♘e3 which gives White good chances for an edge) 12 ♗e3 ♕c6 13 ♘f3 (now that g6 has been forced out of Black, the knight can retreat; 13 f4!? also looks interesting, when my main line of analysis runs 13...♘f6 14 fxe5 dxe5 15 cxb5 axb5 16 ♘xb5 ♘g4 17 a4 ♗c5 – 17...♘xe3 18 ♖ac1 ♗c5 19 b4 is good for White – 18 ♗xc5 ♕xc5+ 19 ♔h1 ♗xb5 20 ♕xb5+ ♕xb5 21 axb5 ♖xa1 22 ♖xa1 0-0 and the endgame is a fraction better for White but probably drawn) 13...♘f6 14 ♘d2 and Black still has a few positional problems.

b) 7...e6 8 0-0 ♘f6 9 ♘c3 ♗c6 10 ♗g5 transposes to variation 'c'.

c) 7...♘f6 8 ♗g5 ♗c6 9 ♘c3 e6 10 0-0 ♗e7 11 ♖fe1 0-0 12 ♖ad1 and now:

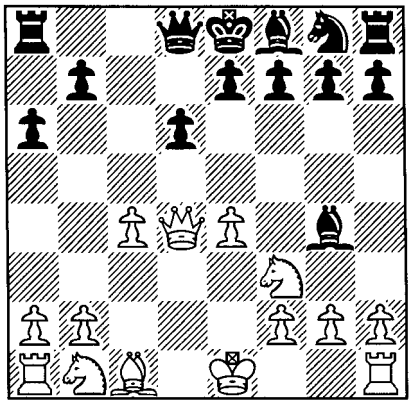


c1) 12...h6!? 13 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 (Palliser suggests 14...♕a5 with rea-

sonable play for the pawn, but I believe White still has some chances to exploit his extra pawn: 15 ♕d2 ♕c5 16 ♖c1 ♖fd8 17 ♕e2 and White has started to neutralize Black's play, while here 15...♖fd8?! 16 ♘d5! is a well-known trick but one which might still catch some players unaware) 15 ♖xd6 ♖fc8 was seen in V.Bologan-L.Van Wely, Internet (blitz) 2004, and now 16 e5 ♗e7 17 ♖d4 ♗xf3 18 gxf3 b5 19 ♖c1! would have left White with reasonable winning chances.

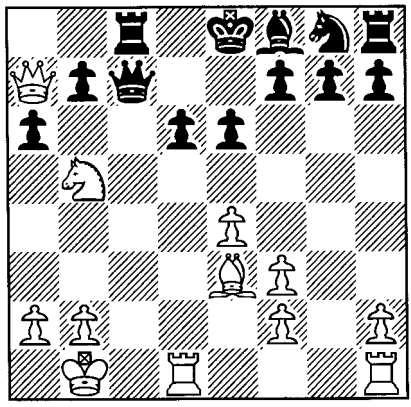
c2) 12...♕a5 13 ♕d2 ♕b6 and here the thematic 14 ♘d5! ♗xd5 15 cxd5 (15 exd5 e5 16 ♘d4! would also promise White an edge) 15...e5 16 ♖c1 ♖fc8 17 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 18 ♖c3 h6 19 ♖ec1 gave White full control of the position in P.Girinath-S.Sitanggang, Singapore 2007.

d) 7...♖c8 8 0-0 transposes to Game 2.



8 ♘c3 e6

8...♗xf3 would be in keeping with Black's previous move, but following 9 gxf3 e6 10 ♗e3 White should have a small edge thanks to his space advantage. Black will struggle to come up with a plan and the doubled f-pawns are actually useful for White, as they support the centre and allow operations down the semi-open g-file. I like the idea of castling long for White and hiding the king away on b1. It's important that 10...♖c8 11 0-0-0! ♕c7 12 ♔b1 is playable as 12...♕xc4 13 ♕a7! ♕c7 (13...♕c6 14 ♖c1) 14 ♘b5! is an extremely strong sacrifice.

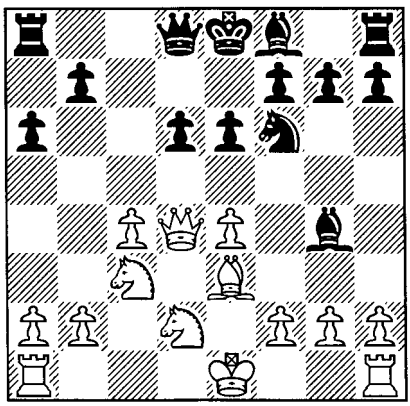


After 14...axb5 (14...♕d7 can be met by 15 ♖c1!; 14...♕b8 is best, although Black is really going to struggle in the endgame after 15 ♕xb8 ♖xb8 16 ♘xd6+ ♗xd6 17 ♖xd6) 15 ♖c1 ♕d7 16 ♖xc8+ ♕xc8 17 ♖c1 the quality of the pieces is far more important than the quantity and Black is forced to give up his queen to prevent mate.

9 ♗e3 ♘f6?!

Giri forgets the knight can run away. 9...♗xf3 had to be played at this point, transposing back into the previous note.

10 ♘d2!



Keeping the knight. Now the bishop on g4 looks very offside. It would be far better on d7 or even c8, as on g4 it is on completely the wrong route. Another drawback is that g4 is wanted by the black knight. White has a very pleasant advantage already.

10...♗e7 11 h3 e5!?

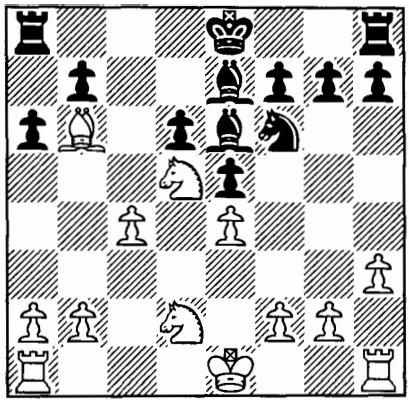
This cedes the d5-square for the rest of the game, but at least allows the bishop to return to the fold. After the alternative, 11...♗h5, the bishop is out of play for the rest of the game. White could even try to exploit that immediately with 12 f4!?, threatening to trap the bishop with g2-g4 and f4-f5. After 12...♗g6 (12...h6 13 f5! doesn't save the bishop, while 12...e5 13 fxe5 dxe5 14 ♕xe5 gives Black insufficient compensation for the pawn) I like the aggressive 13 g4!? (White can win material with 13 0-0, but I wouldn't advise it: 13...h6 14 f5 ♗h7 15 fxe6 fxe6 16 e5 dxe5 17 ♕xe5 ♕d6 18 ♕xd6 ♗xd6 19 ♗xh6 wins a pawn, but Black gets good compensation following 19...♗c5+ 20 ♔h2 ♘g4+ 21 hxg4 ♗d3 22 ♔g3 ♖xh6 23 ♖h1; here White has an extra pawn, but the bishop-pair gives Black good chances) 13...h6 14 0-0-0 when White has good chances on the kingside.

12 ♕b6

Muzychuk, playing the tournament leader, decides to play it safe and reach a fractionally better endgame, a strategy that pays off perfectly.

12 ♕d3 was the more dynamic option: for example, 12...♗e6 13 0-0 0-0 14 a4 ♖c8 15 a5 ♘d7 16 ♘d5 and White has a pleasant advantage with possession of the d5- and b6-outposts and more space on the queenside. Here she could have started advancing her b-pawn when Black's position would start to creak. He doesn't have much counterplay; ...f7-f5 is one idea, but White can deal with it by simply exchanging followed by ♘d2-e4.

12...♕xb6 13 ♗xb6 ♗e6 14 ♘d5



14...♗xd5

I think 14...♖c8! was the most accurate when Black should equalize: 15 0-0 (after 15 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 16 b3 ♖c6 17 ♗e3 b5 Black will successfully open the position for his bishops) 15...♘xd5 16 cxd5 (16 exd5!? is perhaps a more aggressive try) 16...♗d7 17 ♖fc1 0-0 and Black is very close to equality, although not quite there yet.

Vigorito points out that 14...♘xd5 is not sufficient to equalize, as now White will gain possession of the c-file: 15 cxd5 ♗d7 16 ♖c1 ♖c8 17 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 18 ♔e2 ♗d7 (18...♗d8 is mentioned by Vigorito when I like 19 ♘c4!) 19 ♖c1 ♗d8 20 ♗xd8 ♔xd8 21 ♔e3 (Vigorito) would leave Black in a very unpleasant endgame, as d6 and b6 are big problems in his structure. Perhaps he should try 21...♔e7 in order to be able to exchange the rooks, but 22 f4!? exf4+ 23 ♔xf4 ♖c8 24 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 25 ♘c4 would continue to set problems.

15 cxd5 ♗d8

15...♖c8 16 ♔e2 0-0 17 ♖ac1 is also somewhat unpleasant.

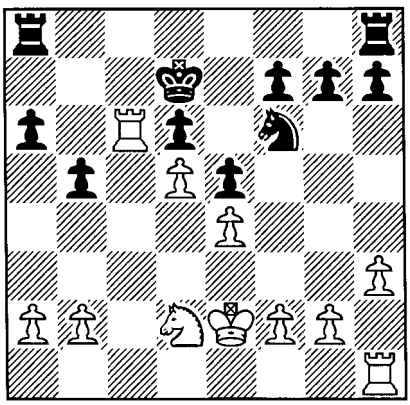
15...♘d7 16 ♗e3 ♖c8 is offered by Vigorito, although it doesn't save Black from the

same unpleasant endgame after 17 ♔e2 0-0 (17...♖c2? does nothing as White can play 18 ♔d3 when the rook is trapped after 18...♖xb2 19 ♔c3 ♖b5 20 a4) 18 ♖hc1.

16 ♗xd8 ♔xd8 17 ♖c1 b5

I would be very happy to see this move as now c6 is a huge hole. Giri was obviously scared of the knight jumping via c4 to b6, but in my view this is a bigger weakness. 17...♖c8 18 ♔e2 ♔e7 (18...♘d7? 19 ♖xc8+ ♔xc8 20 ♘c4 ♔c7 21 ♖c1 wins material) 19 ♔e3 ♘d7 20 ♘b3 was better, although Black will still have to suffer.

18 ♔e2 ♔d7 19 ♖c6



Happily taking control of the c6-square.

19...♖hc8 20 ♖hc1 ♖xc6?!

I think Giri overlooked the strength of White's 22nd. Instead 20...♘g8 was more accurate, not allowing the rook to remain on the sixth rank.

21 ♖xc6 ♘g8 22 a4! ♘e7 23 ♖b6

Now it takes a long time to shift the rook from the sixth rank where it targets two weaknesses. I think the position is already lost for Black.

23...♔c7 24 a5 ♖a7 25 ♘f3!

Threatening 26 ♘xe5, as well as starting on the long road to the b4-square.

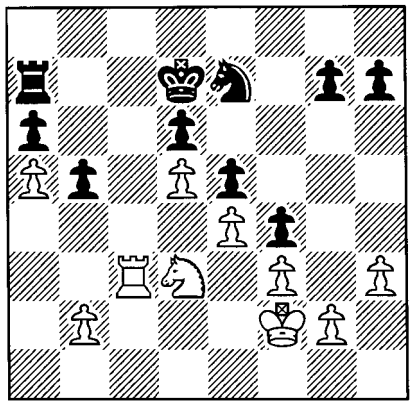
25...f6

Black's active attempt at counterplay fails: 25...f5 26 ♘xe5! fxe4 (26...dxe5 27 d6+ ♔d7 28 dxe7 fxe4 29 ♖e6! would have been hopeless) 27 ♘c6 ♘xd5! (or 27...♘xc6 28 ♖xc6+ ♔d7 29 ♔e3) 28 ♘xa7 ♘xb6 29 axb6+ ♔xb6 30 ♘c8+ ♔c5 31 f3 exf3+ 32 gxf3 and White's extra knight should see her through.

26 ♘e1 ♘c8 27 ♖c6+ ♔d7 28 ♘d3 ♘e7

Black has managed to force the rook away, but a6 is still a chronic weakness.

29 ♖c3 f5 30 f3 f4 31 ♔f2



As Black's pieces are forced to remain on the queenside to defend his weaknesses, Muzychuk correctly opens up the kingside.

31...♖a8 32 h4 g6 33 g3! fxg3+ 34 ♔xg3 g5?

Often I find when my opponent has been under pressure all game eventually he cracks and we see it here too. This move smacks of desperation. Giri wanted to activate his rook, but he does not get anywhere near his goal.

Black should have waited with 34...h6, but 35 ♘b4 puts him in zugzwang: 35...♖g8 (35...♖a7 36 ♘c6! ♘xc6 37 ♖xc6 is given by Vigorito when White is easily winning as Black cannot stop him breaking through on the kingside) 36 ♘xa6! ♖a8 37 ♘c7 ♖xa5 38 ♘e6 ♖a7 (38...♖a2 39 ♖c7+ ♔e8 40 ♖b7 is lost as White threatens to win the knight with 41 ♖b8+) 39 f4 exf4+ 40 ♔xf4 b4

(40...♖b7 41 ♖a3! would again leave Black unable to deal with the threats: 41...b4 42 ♖a8 ♘c8 43 ♘f8+ when g6 drops for starters, 41...♖b8 42 ♖a7+ ♔e8 43 e5! sees White crash through, and 41...♘c8 42 ♖g3 ♘e7 43 ♘f8+ is likewise hopeless) 41 ♖c4 ♖b7 42 b3 and again Black is in zugzwang.

35 hxg5 ♖g8 36 ♔h4 h6 37 gxh6 ♖g1

So Black's rook is active, but at the cost of two pawns, one of which is now on the sixth rank.

38 ♖c1

Simple chess.

38...♖g6

38...♘g6+ 39 ♔h5 ♘f4+ picks up the exchange, but it's easy to see that the h-pawn is simply too strong after 40 ♘xf4 ♖xc1 41 ♘g6 ♖h1+ 42 ♘h4.

39 f4

Unnecessary, but it doesn't change the result. 39 ♔h5, defending the pawn, was much simpler.

39...♖xh6+ 40 ♔g3 exf4+ 41 ♘xf4 ♘g6 42 ♘e6 ♔e7 43 ♘d4 ♔f6 44 ♘f5 ♖h5 45 ♖c8 ♖g5+ 46 ♔f3 ♖g1 47 ♘xd6 ♖b1 48 ♖e8 ♖xb2 49 ♖e6+ ♔g5 50 ♘f7+ ♔h5 51 ♔e3 ♖b3+ 52 ♔d4 ♖b4+ 53 ♔c5 ♖c4+ 54 ♔b6 b4 55 ♖xg6 1-0

A commendable positional effort by the young Slovenian. I should point out that at the time of writing, her opponent, Anish Giri, is rated 2686 and thus to beat him so comfortably speaks of excellent technique coupled to a great opening!

Game 2
J.Hammer-M.Carlhammar
Gibraltar 2009

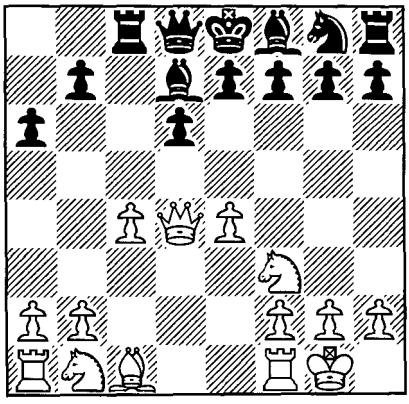
1 ♘f3 c5 2 e4 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘d7 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♕xd4 a6 6 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 7 0-0

This move has a reputation for being a little inflexible so I think the move order in the last game was more accurate. Palliser has suggested 7 ♗g5!? as an interesting idea, hoping to transpose to Ivanchuk-Kasparov after 7...♘f6 8 0-0, but 7...h6 (forcing the bishop away from the centre) 8 ♗h4 ♕a5+! is currently doing quite well for Black.

7...♖c8

As Palliser points out, 7...♗g4 seems to be a good remedy to the immediate 7 0-0. If you compare this to the last game then you can see that taking on f3 is more of a real threat. After 8 ♕d3 (perhaps 8 c4!? is still playable here, as I don't entirely see how Black get at White's king) 8...♘f6 9 c4 ♖c8 10 b3 g6 11 ♘c3 ♗g7 12 ♘d4 0-0 13 f3 ♗d7 14 ♗e3 ♕a5 in M.Oratovsky-B.Gelfand, Belgrade 1999, the players had transposed to an Accelerated Dragon-type position where Black didn't have any real problems.

8 c4



So now we've transposed to a position which can also arise from 7 c4 ♖c8 8 0-0.

8...♕c7

An aggressive try and one we have to be ready for. Carlhammar is focusing all his attention on putting pressure on c4, but this is extremely risky as he is already behind in development. Thus Black might prefer:

a) 8...♗g4 was once tried here by a grandmaster formerly from China and currently from Singapore. It makes more sense to play this move once White has castled kingside. Now:

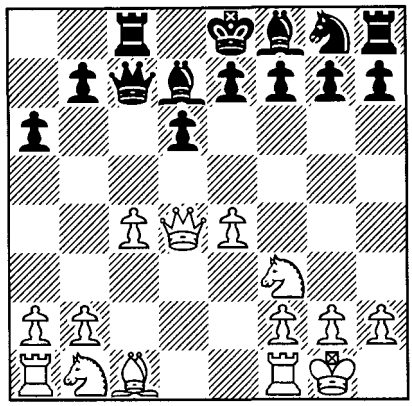
a1) I still don't find 9 ♘c3 a ridiculous move, as I wouldn't be too worried about my king's safety following 9...♗xf3 10 gxf3 e6 11 ♖d1, although it's not as good as the previous game as White would prefer his king over on the queenside.

a2) 9 ♘bd2 is the main move, however: 9...♘f6 10 h3 ♗d7 11 ♖e1 (11 e5 immediately looks enough for an edge, as 11...dxe5 12 ♘xe5 ♗f5 13 ♘df3 ♕xd4 14 ♘xd4 allows White to exchange the light-squared bishop and hold a pleasant plus) 11...g6 12 e5! dxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♗g7 14 ♘df3 (14 ♕a7!? is an interesting cyber suggestion) 14...0-0 15 ♕h4 ♗c6 was seen in P.Girinath-Zhang Zhong, Kuala Lumpur 2007, and here the simple 16 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 17 ♗g5 looks pleasant.

b) 8...e5 9 ♕d3 h6 sees some prophylaxis before Black develops the knight. This was played in L.Bergez-R.Reinaldo Castineira, Barcelona 2009, when I like the immediate 10 a4!, immediately eyeing up the hole on b6: for instance, 10...♘f6 11 a5 ♗e7 12 ♘c3 0-0 13 ♗e3 ♗e6 14 b3 and White has a very pleasant bind on Black's position. Instead here, 9...♘f6?! would be quite a well-known error, as 10 ♗g5! ♗e6 11 b3 ♗e7 12 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 13 ♘c3 leaves Black unable to challenge White's possession of d5. This is an important exception to the rule of the strength of the two bishops.

c) 8...♘f6 is a rather strange mix of plans: 9 ♘c3 ♕a5 10 ♘d5 (opening up the centre with 10 e5 also looks attractive) 10...♕c5 11 ♘b6 ♕xd4 12 ♘xd4 ♖c7 13 f3 g6 14 ♗e3 ♗g7 (Z.Siklosi-R.Ruck, Austrian League 2000) 15 ♖ac1 0-0 16 b3 would leave Black in another unpleasant bind.

Returning to 8...♕c7:



9 b3 b5

9...e5 was tried three days later in another game of the young Norwegian's, who continued 10 ♕d3:

a) 10...h6 is too slow as White can play 11 ♘c3 ♘f6 12 a4 followed by 13 ♗a3, putting pressure on d6.

b) Both 10...♘f6 11 ♗g5 and 10...♗e7 11 ♘c3 ♘f6 12 ♗g5 look very pleasant for White, as we'll have the outpost on d5 and continued pressure on d6.

c) Therefore Black should try 10...b5 when I agree with Vigorito that White should have tried 11 ♘a3, transposing to note 'c' to Black's 10th move in our main game, below. Instead 11 ♘bd2 ♘f6 12 ♗a3 ♗e7 13 ♖fc1 ♕b6 14 ♖c2 b4 15 ♗b2 0-0 was fine for Black, as White's knights were so far from d5 in J.Hammer-M.Roiz, Gibraltar 2009.

10 ♘a3!

Jon Ludvig both puts pressure on b5 and prepares to recapture on c4 with the knight.

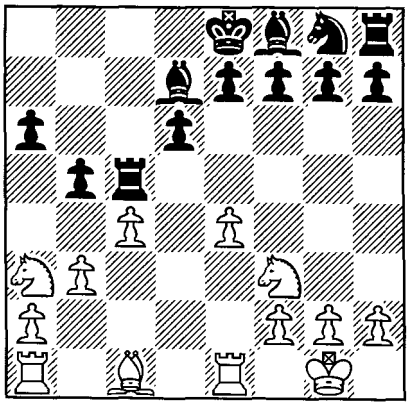
10 ♗g5!? was the idea of a creative Dutch IM in W.Hendriks-L.Trent, London 2009, but I'm not convinced White has quite enough compensation following

10...e5 11 ♕d1 bxc4, although it certainly results in a very interesting position.

10...♘f6

This natural-looking move is actually a mistake as White can now punish Black for his slow development. Instead:

a) 10...♕c5 was suggested by Vigorito, but 11 ♕xc5 ♖xc5 12 ♖e1 leaves White with a strong initiative despite the exchange of queens.

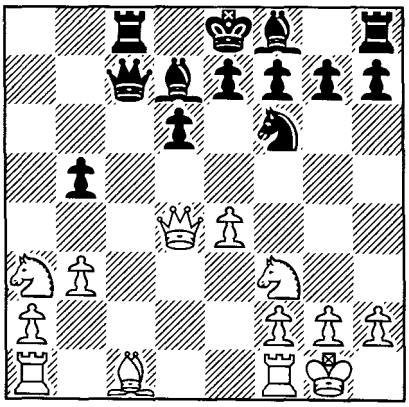


For example, 12...♘f6 (12...♖c8 13 ♗d2 ♘f6 14 ♗b4 also looks good for White) 13 e5 dxe5 14 ♘xe5 e6 15 ♗b2 ♗d6 16 ♖ad1 ♖xe5 17 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♗xe5 with continued pressure in the ending.

b) 10...♗c6 doesn't prevent 11 e5! ♗xf3 (perhaps 11...e6 is a better bet, although I'd still prefer to be White after 12 cxb5 axb5 13 ♗b2) 12 exd6 ♕xd6 13 ♕xd6 exd6 14 gxf3 and again White's pressure is ongoing despite the simplification.

c) Perhaps 10...e5 should have been played. Then 11 ♕d3 ♕b7 12 ♖e1 defends the e4-pawn, when I think Black should prepare ...♘f6 with 12...h6 (12...♘f6 13 ♗g5 is a little awkward) 13 ♗d2 ♘f6 14 cxb5 axb5 15 ♗b4 ♗c6 16 ♖ac1 ♖d8 (16...♗e7 17 ♘xb5! is a nice tactic). Perhaps here White should attempt to take possession of d5 with 17 ♘d2 (after 17 ♕c3 ♗xe4? 18 ♘xe5! White crashes through, but 17...♗d7 18 ♕c7 ♕a6 19 ♕c3 ♕b7 looks like a draw) 17...♗e7 18 ♘c2 (18 ♖xc6!? ♕xc6 19 ♕xb5 ♕xb5 20 ♘xb5 is a very interesting exchange sacrifice, as our two connected pawns will take some stopping) 18...0-0 19 ♘e3 g6 20 f3 ♖c8 21 ♘b1 when a complex strategic battle is in prospect, in which we should try our best to prevent Black liberating his position with ...d6-d5.

11 cxb5 axb5



12 e5!

White opens up the centre, and why not? His king is tucked away safely, while Black's is still in the centre and it will take it at least three moves to castle; a luxury Black cannot afford.

12...dxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♕b7

Another tempo drops, but unfortunately this one was forced as White was threatening to take twice on d7 followed by picking up the b5-pawn.

14 ♗g5

14 ♗b2! is the suggestion of Vigorito when Black has real problems getting his king to safety: 14...e6 (14..g6 would again lose the b5-pawn to 15 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 16 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 17 ♘xb5) 15 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 16 ♖ac1! (I think this is more convincing than Vigorito's 16 ♖fd1, as then Black can try to

cover with 16...♖c5) 16...♖a8 (16...♖d8 17 ♖fd1 would be just terrible for Black) 17 b4! and Black is encountering real problems, as shown by 17...♘f6 (covering g7; otherwise he will never be able to develop his king-side) 18 ♕d3 ♗xb4 19 ♘xb5 0-0 20 ♗xf6 gxf6 21 ♖c4 with a very dangerous initiative for White.

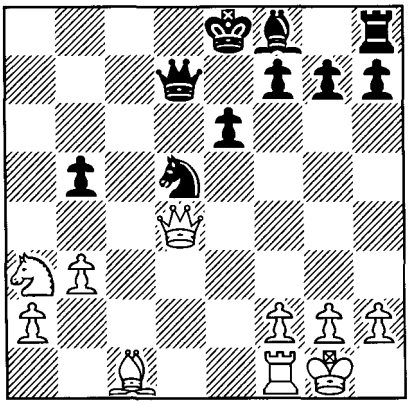
14...♘d5

Hammer evidently missed the strength of this move.

15 ♖ac1 ♖xc1 16 ♗xc1

16 ♖xc1 might of course be preferred, but 16...f6 seems playable for Black.

16...e6 17 ♘xd7 ♕xd7



White is still a little better, but Black is getting closer to achieving a secure king position, while it's a little awkward to bring the a3-knight into the game.

18 ♖e1

The computer suggests 18 ♕e5!?, with the idea of ♕e2 to help open up a line for that misplaced knight on a3. It seems White still has something following 18...♕c7 19 ♕e2 b4 20 ♘b5 ♕d7 21 ♗b2 f6, although Black is closing in on equality.

18...♗b4

18...f6! followed by 19...♔f7 looks simplest when Black has no real problems.

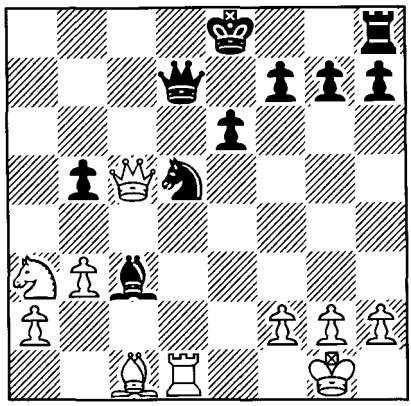
19 ♖d1!

Instead 19 ♕xg7 ♗c3 was Black's idea.

19...♗c3?!

It wasn't too late for 19...f6, but perhaps Carlhammar had earlier overlooked that 19...0-0?? drops the b4-bishop.

20 ♕c5



Now Black again has some problems with his king and White's knight is returning to the attack.

20...b4

20...♗b4 21 ♕xb5 ♗xa3 22 ♕b8+ ♕d8 23 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 24 ♗xa3 was relatively best, although the two connected passed pawns should promise White victory.

21 ♘c4

The queen and knight are a powerful duo and here there's no way to save the isolated king.

21...f6 22 ♘b6 ♕b7 23 ♘xd5 exd5 24 ♖xd5

White picks up a pawn and the initiative persists as the rook now replaces the knight in the attack.

24...♖f8

A belated attempt to get the rook into the game.

25 ♗f4 ♖f7 26 ♗d6

26 ♕c4! immediately was the most accurate as Black has no good defence to 27 ♖c5.

26...♖d7 27 ♕c4! ♖d8 28 ♖e5+ 1-0

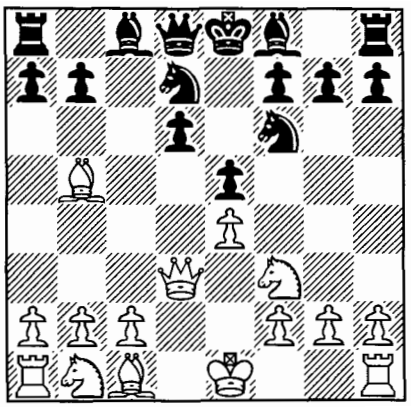
Game 3
Bu Xiangzhi-G.Guseinov
Internet (blitz) 2005

I've included this game to show that even strong GMs can fall into quite a common positional trap.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘d7 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♕xd4 e5 6 ♕d3

Once Black plays an early ...e5 we can adopt a slightly strange-looking plan of exchanging both our bishops for knights. This is because we want total control of d5. The position is fairly closed and so Black's bishop-pair, particularly the dark-squared bishop, will be stifled by our knights.

6...♘gf6?!



A move played on autopilot that the strong Azerbaijani GM quickly comes to regret. This game was just a blitz game played online and so obviously there are mistakes. However, both players are strong GMs and they were playing in a tournament with good prizes.

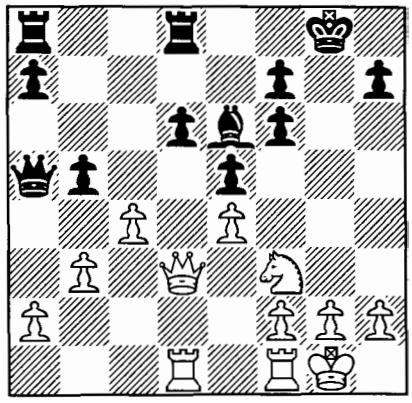
If Black wants to play this way then I think he should continue with 6...h6 to prevent our ♗g5 plan. Then a logical continuation would be 7 0-0 ♘gf6 8 c4 ♗e7 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 ♗xd7! ♗xd7 11 ♖d1 a6 12 c5 and we have transposed to Rublevsky-Efimenko (Game 10).

6...♗e7 has also been played quite often, but I think here too White can find a pleasant advantage. It's worth following the subsequent moves with attention as Rublevsky, an expert in the 3 ♗b5 lines, employs White's idea to perfection: 7 ♘c3 ♘gf6 8 ♗g5 0-0 9 ♗xd7!. Now:

a) 9...♗xd7 just drops a pawn to 10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 (10...gxf6 11 ♘h4 is truly hideous) 11 ♕xd6.

b) Likewise, 9...♘xd7 loses d6 after 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 11 0-0-0.

c) 9...♕xd7 10 ♗xf6 (10 0-0-0 ♖d8 11 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 12 ♘d5 ♕a4 13 ♔b1, as suggested by Har Zvi, is also very pleasant for White) 10...♗xf6 11 ♖d1 ♖d8 12 ♘d5 ♕a4 13 0-0 ♗e6 14 b3 ♕a5 15 ♘xf6+ gxf6 16 c4 b5 was forced in S.Rublevsky-A.Minasian, Krasnodar 1997, since otherwise White plays a2-a4 and Black is totally tied up.



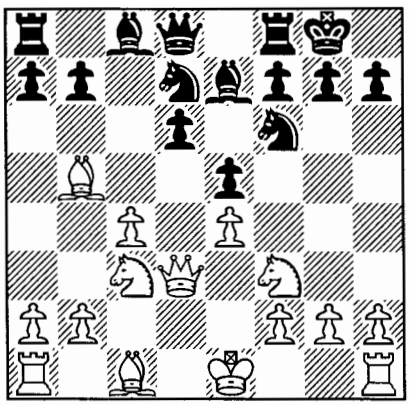
Here I think White should play 17 ♘d2 bxc4 18 ♘xc4 ♗xc4 19 bxc4 ♖ab8, as given by Har Zvi who thought Black had good compensation against White's weakened queenside. However, Black's king is too vulnerable and 20 ♕g3+ ♔f8 21 ♕h4 ♔e7 22 ♖d3! ♕xa2 23 ♖f3 leaves White with an extremely strong initiative: for instance,

23...♕xc4 24 ♖xf6 ♔e8 25 ♕xh7 and the position is looking decidedly dubious for the second player.

7 c4

Black's sloppy last move allowed us to adopt our plan with 7 ♗g5!, which causes immediate problems as Igor Efimov, Monaco's sole Grandmaster, discovered: 7...a6 8 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 9 ♘c3 ♖c8 10 0-0 ♖c6 was C.Claverie-I.Efimov, Belfort 2004, and here the strongest seems to be 11 ♗xf6! ♕xf6 12 ♘d5 ♕d8 13 ♕b3 ♗c8 (13...b5 14 a4) 14 c4 when, with just a glance at the board, we can see that White's knight dominates.

7...♗e7 8 ♘c3 0-0



9 ♗xd7!

The knight was threatening to move so it had to be taken. It's important not to rush with 9 ♗g5? as then we would be rather embarrassed by 9...♘c5 10 ♕c2 a6.

9...♗xd7

9...♘xd7 would have been stronger, not allowing White to complete his plan, but White is still better after 10 ♗e3, as Black's pieces don't coordinate very well.

10 ♗g5! ♘h5?!

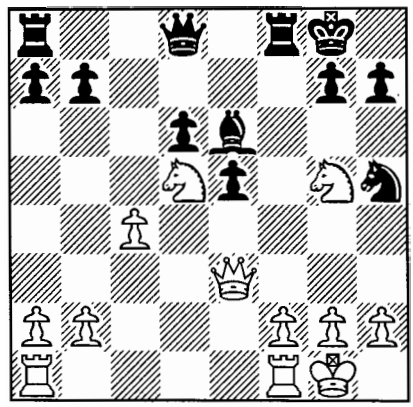
Guseinov knows what's coming so he tries to avoid the two knights squashing the two bishops. However this should just lose a pawn.

10...♗e6 11 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 12 0-0 ♕a5 13 ♖fd1 ♖ac8 14 b3 was a lesser evil, but it's clear White has the upper hand. Note that 14...a6 can be met by 15 a4!, not allowing Black the freeing ...b7-b5.

11 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 12 ♘d5

Not a bad move, but 12 0-0-0! simply won a pawn as d6 couldn't be defended: 12...♗g4 13 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 14 ♖xd6 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 f5 16 ♖d7 and White's a clear pawn up.

12...♕d8 13 0-0 f5 14 exf5 ♗xf5 15 ♕e3 ♗e6 16 ♘g5



16...♗xd5

Guseinov decides to get rid of the d5-knight, but now the other knight will cause problems.

17 cxd5 ♘f4 18 ♘e4 ♕d7 19 g3 ♘h5

19...♘xd5? drops the knight to 20 ♕b3 ♕f7 21 ♘g5.

20 ♖ac1

Black still has problems with his d6-pawn and White has pressure down the c-file. Indeed, 20 ♕a3! was also unpleasant.

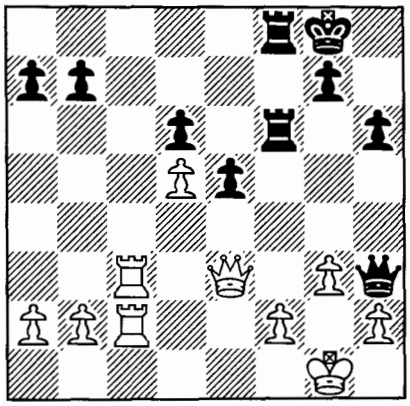
20...h6?!

Guseinov should have taken the opportunity to exchange the knights with 20...♘f6.

21 ♖c3

Again, 21 ♕a3!.

21...♘f6 22 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 23 ♖fc1 ♖af8 24 ♖1c2 ♕h3?!



The queen should have been placed actively, with 24...♕g4, when Black's play on the kingside is enough to hold the balance.

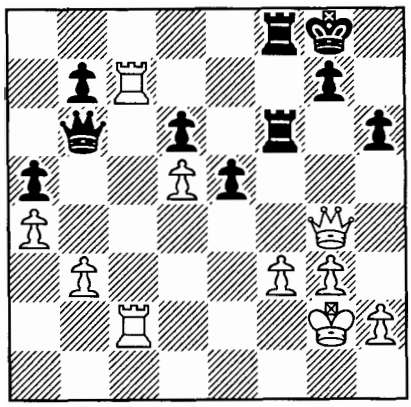
25 ♕e4

White's queen now dominates Black's, although there was nothing wrong with grabbing the a7-pawn.

25...♕h5 26 ♔g2 ♕f7 27 f3 ♕e8 28 a4 a5 29 b3 ♕d8 30 ♕g4 ♕b6?

30...♖6f7 should have been played to protect the seventh rank, although it's clear that Black is being squashed and 31 ♖c8 ♕b6 32 ♖2c3 would have increased the pressure.

31 ♖c7!



31...♖6f7?!

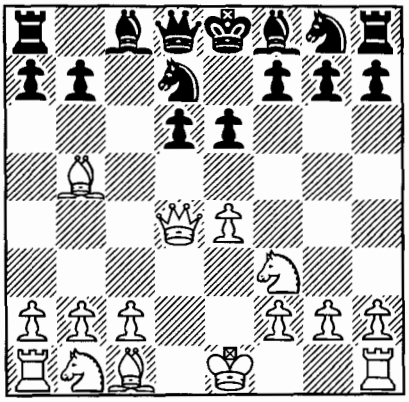
31...g6 was better as then White would have had to have found the following sequence: 32 ♖e7! ♕e3 33 ♖cc7! ♕e2+ 34 ♔h3 ♕f1+ 35 ♔h4 g5+ 36 ♔h5 ♕d3 37 ♖g7+ ♔h8 38 ♕e4! and it would have been all over.

32 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 33 ♕e6 1-0

Game 4
A.Chuiko-V.Arbakov
Tula 2000

In this game I wrap up coverage of the immediate 4...cxd4, including Black's rarer options.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘d7 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♕xd4 e6

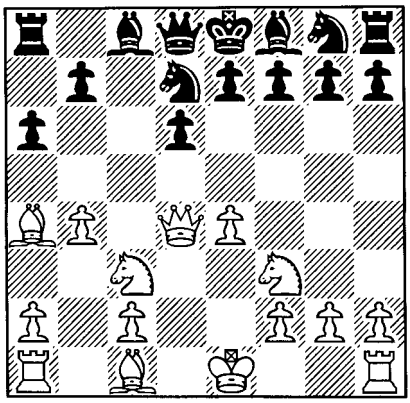


This is a more passive option than 5...e5, but it does keep control over d5. The resulting positions resemble a Classical Sicilian and I advise that we should continue with our planned Maroczy bind approach.

Black has also been known to try:

a) 5...♕a5+ has been tried six times from what I can see. This check stops us constructing our bind, but Black loses time as the queen will likely have to move again. After 6 ♘c3 a6 White has always captured

on d7, but I wonder if 7 b4!? might be an improvement. The pawn is useful controlling the c5-square and allows us to fianchetto the c1-bishop, as well as to gain some important tempi. Indeed, following 7...♕d8 (if 7...♕c7 8 ♘d5! ♕xc2 9 ♗d3 ♕c6 10 ♗e3 and Black won't be able to keep the queen) 8 ♗a4 White's extra development promises him very good chances, as can be seen from a quick look at some different options for Black:



a1) It's important to note that 8...b5 can always be met by 9 ♗b3 e6 10 a4! with a great advantage on the queenside.

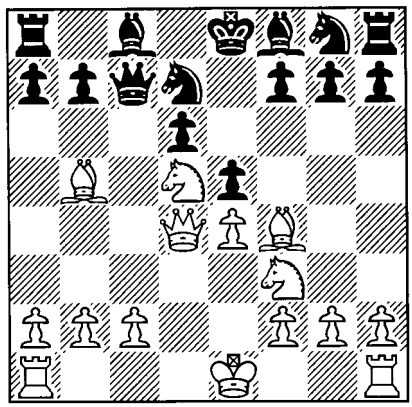
a2) 8...e6 9 0-0 ♘gf6 10 ♖d1 and here the threat of 11 e5 is rather awkward to deal with:

a21) 10...♕c7 11 e5! dxe5 12 ♘xe5 b5 13 ♗f4! ♕b6 14 ♗b3 ♕xd4 15 ♖xd4 and White's initiative is ongoing and a2-a4 is an annoying threat.

a22) 10...b5 11 ♗b3 followed by 12 a4 is again very pleasant.

a23) 10...♗e7 11 e5 dxe5 12 ♘xe5 b5 13 ♘c6 ♕b6 14 ♘xe7 ♕xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♔xe7 16 ♗b3 ♗b7 17 a4 and we should be very happy with our middlegame position.

b) 5...♕c7 was tried by a young Nakamura. 6 ♘c3 (6 c4 is again possible, but it makes sense to try and exploit Black's early queen move) 6...e6 was R.Prasca Sosa-H.Nakamura, La Paz 2002, and here White could have put Black under immense pressure with 7 ♗f4! e5 (or 7...♘gf6 8 e5 dxe5 9 ♗xe5 ♕d8 10 0-0-0 and Black won't survive long) 8 ♘d5:



b1) 8...♕b8? 9 ♘xe5! dxe5 10 ♗xe5 ♗d6 11 ♗xg7 wins.

b2) 8...♕d8 9 ♘xe5! dxe5 10 ♕xe5+ ♗e7 11 ♕xg7 ♗f6 12 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 13 ♗e5 is also resignable for Black.

b3) 8...♕a5+ 9 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 10 ♗xd2 and Black is positionally busted.

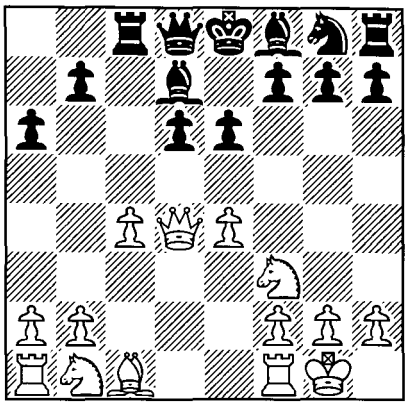
c) 5...h6 has only been tried three times in the *MegaBase*, but by an average rating of 2630. Black's idea is of course to prevent ♗c1-g5. I think it would make sense to play 6 c4!? which is likely to transpose to other lines, although 6 e5!? also looks interesting, trying to exploit Black's wasted tempo.

6 0-0 a6

6...♘gf6 is likely to transpose after 7 c4 to Bologan-van Wely seen in the note 'c' to Black's 7th move in Game 1, but Black might try to gain a tempo by never playing ...a6. However, in any case, I like the look of 7 e5!?, immediately trying to exploit Black's delay. Then 7...dxe5 8 ♘xe5 ♗e7 (8...a6 9 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 10 ♖d1 grants White a little something) 9 ♖d1! a6 10 ♗xd7+ (10 ♕a4!?

is an alternative way to retain the pressure) 10...♗xd7 11 ♘c3 puts Black under some pressure.

7 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 8 c4 ♖c8



Again we see Black putting pressure on our c4-pawn, rather than developing his kingside.

Instead 8...♘f6 9 ♗g5 ♗c6 10 ♘c3 would again transpose to note 'c' to Black's 7th move in Muzychuk-Giri.

9 ♗g5

Black's early ...♖c8 is directed against 9 ♘c3!, but I'm not convinced. Black plays 9...♕c7 10 b3 b5 winning the c4-pawn, but White can generate a large initiative: for example, 11 ♗a3 bxc4 12 ♖ac1 ♘f6 13 bxc4 ♕xc4 14 ♕e3 e5 (14...♗e7 15 ♖fd1 0-0 16 e5! ♘g4 17 ♕e1! leaves Black in a lot of trouble) 15 ♖fd1 and I think White's initiative must be worth more than the sacrificed pawn.

9...♕c7 10 ♘bd2

Black can claim something from the opening as the knight has developed to the slightly more passive d2-square rather than c3. However we still have our bind, and can try to expand on the queenside and to utilize our lead in development.

10...h6 11 ♗e3 ♘f6

11...e5!? is interesting. Although it appears Black has lost a tempo our knight on d2 is a long way from d5. This would at least prevent the plan Chuiko adopts in the game.

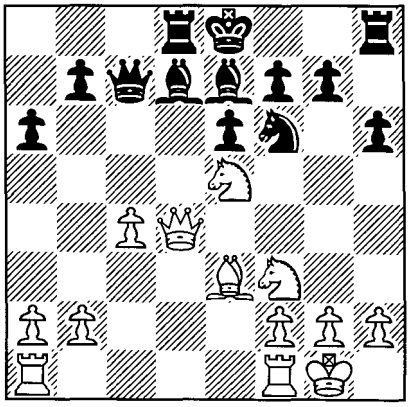
12 e5!? dxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♖d8

Black has a couple of alternatives here:

a) 13...♗c5 14 ♕xc5 ♕xc5 15 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 16 ♖fe1 and White is a little better.

b) 13...♗c6 looks the most accurate when Black can probably equalize with accurate play: 14 ♘xc6 (14 ♘df3 ♗xf3! equalizes) 14...♕xc6 15 ♘f3 ♗c5 16 ♕c3 ♗xe3 17 ♕xe3 ♕c5 with rough equality.

14 ♘df3 ♗e7



15 ♕b6

15 ♕a7! looks like a little nuance, retaining the advantage: 15...♕b8 16 ♕xb8 ♖xb8 17 ♖ad1 and Black struggles to castle while White can exchange off the bishop on d7 whenever he wishes.

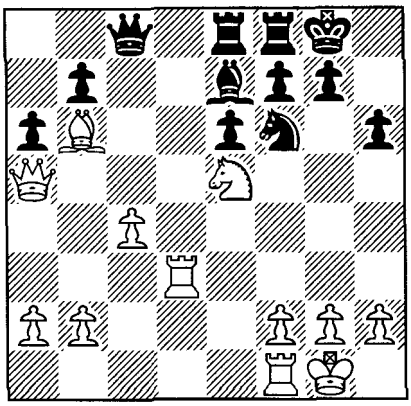
15...♕c8

15...♕xb6 16 ♗xb6 ♖c8 17 ♖ad1 ♗c6 18 b3 is slightly better for White, but Black should unravel and equalize with care.

16 ♕a5 0-0 17 ♗b6 ♖de8 18 ♖ad1 ♗c6 19 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 20 ♘e5 ♕c8 21 ♖d3

This is exactly what Chuiko was aiming for with 11 e5. Black is extremely passive and White has total control over the board. If Black does nothing then we can start ad-

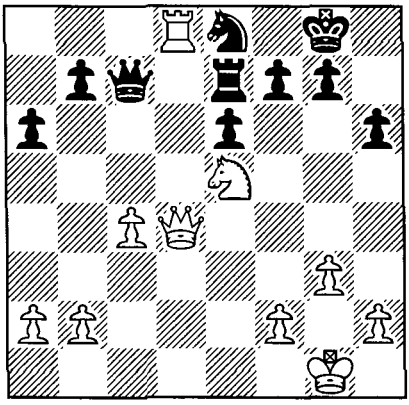
vancing on the queenside, creating a passed pawn or else targeting the vulnerable b7-pawn.



21...♗d8 22 ♖fd1 ♗xb6 23 ♕xb6 ♖e7

Black defends b7 and the seventh rank, but cedes control over the back rank.

24 ♖d8! ♕c7 25 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 26 ♖d8+ ♘e8 27 ♕d4 ♔g8 28 g3!?



White gives his king some luft and challenges Black to come up with a way to extricate his pieces.

28...♔h7 29 ♘xf7

White grabs the pawn, although it was also possible to keep Black completely bound up, for instance with 29 b4!?

29...e5 30 ♕g4 ♕b6

30...♕c6 31 ♕f5+ g6 32 ♕c8 would leave Black in a technically lost ending.

31 ♕e4+

31 ♘g5+! hxg5 32 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 33 ♕h5+ ♕h6 34 ♕xe8 is a winning queen endgame, although it may take a while to convert. Again White's plan would be to create a passed pawn on the queenside.

31...g6 32 ♕e3 ♕xe3 33 fxe3 ♘f6

The white knight becomes too powerful so 33...♔g7 34 ♘d6 ♘xd6 35 ♖xd6 probably should have been tried, although the endgame should be lost.

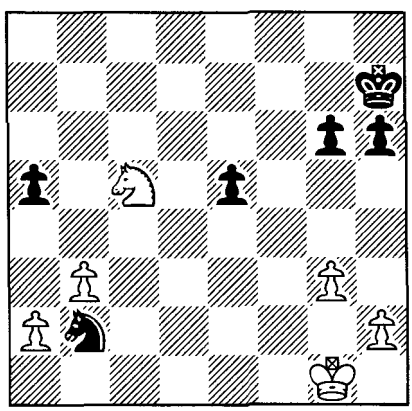
34 ♘d6 ♘g4 35 ♖b8!?

35 e4 followed by 36 ♖b8 was easier.

35...♘xe3 36 ♖xb7

And here there was no need to give up the c-pawn, with 36 c5 a stronger option.

36...♖xb7 37 ♘xb7 ♘xc4 38 b3 ♘b2 39 ♘c5 a5



40 ♘b7?!

40 ♔f2! was instantly winning. Black must play 40...♘d1+ (otherwise 41 ♔e2-d2-c2 would have picked up the knight which can't get out), but after 41 ♔f3 ♘c3 42 a4 followed by 43 ♘b7 the two connected passed pawns should win easily.

40...a4 41 bxa4?

41 ♘c5 was stronger when the white knight dominates its counterpart.

41...♘xa4

White has now given up nearly all his edge, although he still went on to win.

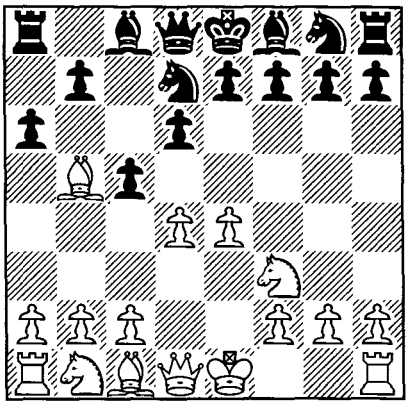
42 ♘d6 ♔g7 43 ♘c4 ♔f6 44 ♔f2 ♔e6 45 ♔e3 ♔d5 46 ♘d2 ♘c3 47 a3 e4 48 ♘b3 ♔e5 49 ♘c5 ♘d1+ 50 ♔e2 ♘c3+ 51 ♔e3 ♔d5 52 ♘d7 ♘d1+ 53 ♔e2 ♘b2 54 ♘f6+ ♔d4 55 h4 h5 56 ♘d7 ♘a4 57 ♘f8 ♘c3+ 58 ♔e1 e3?

Black blunders. Instead after 58...♔e3 59 ♘xg6 ♔f3 60 ♘f4 ♔xg3 61 ♘xh5+ ♔xh4 the players could have shaken hands.

59 ♘xg6 ♔e4 60 ♘f4 ♔f3 61 ♘xh5 ♘a4 62 ♘f4 ♔xg3 63 ♘g2 ♔g4 64 ♔d1 ♘b2+ 65 ♔e2 ♔h5 66 ♔f3 ♘c4 67 a4 ♘a5 68 ♔xe3 ♘b3 69 ♔f4 ♘a5 70 ♔e5 ♘c4+ 71 ♔d4 ♘a5 1-0

Game 5
Ni Hua-M.Carlsen
London 2009

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘d7 4 d4 a6



This has been considered somewhat dubious in the past, although its adoption by the then world no.1 will no doubt help to boost its popularity. Although White lost this game I think he was doing well out of the opening.

5 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7

Black has also tried 5...♕xd7, but it looks extremely slow to me: 6 ♘c3 e6 7 dxc5 dxc5 8 ♕e2!? (more dynamic than 8 0-0, although 8...♕xd1 9 ♖xd1 b5 10 ♘e5 ♘f6 11 f3 is a little better for White) 8...♘f6 9 ♗g5 ♗e7 10 ♖d1 ♕c6 11 ♘e5 ♕c7 12 ♗f4 ♗d6 13 ♖xd6! ♕xd6 14 ♘g6 e5 15 ♘xh8 exf4 16 e5 ♕e6 17 exf6 gxf6 18 ♘d5! ♔f8 19 ♘xf4 ♕xe2+ 20 ♔xe2 ♔g7 21 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 22 ♖d1 and White swiftly converted his extra pawn in A.Soltis-R.Morrison, Columbus 1977.

6 dxc5

This is the critical test of 4...a6. If Black recaptures with the pawn then White will be able to use the e5-square, but if Black takes with the queen then White will gain tempi to start an initiative.

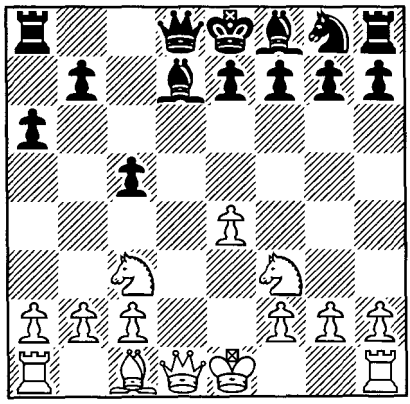
6...dxc5

6...♕a5+ is the alternative, but as Palliser points out, White retains a strong initiative with 7 ♘c3 ♕xc5 8 ♗e3 ♕a5 9 ♕d5!:

a) Swapping queens doesn't extinguish White's play: 9...♕xd5 10 ♘xd5 ♖c8 11 0-0-0 ♗c6 12 ♖he1 and Black faces some issues to complete his development.

b) 9...♕c7 was preferred in A.Adorjan-L.Ljubojevic, Wijk aan Zee 1972. Here White should try 10 ♕b3!?, grabbing hold of b6: for example, 10...e6 11 ♗b6 ♕c6 12 0-0-0 ♖c8 13 ♖d3 with constant pressure.

7 ♘c3



7...e6

Black's most common choice, endeavouring to develop his kingside, but a couple of bishop moves have also been tried:

a) 7...♗c6 8 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 9 ♘e5 ♖c8 was asking to suffer for the rest of the game in B.Socko-V.Bologan, Internet (blitz) 2004. Then 10 ♗f4 e6 11 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 12 0-0-0 would have given Black immediate problems, as the plan of doubling on the d-file is hard to counter: for instance, 12...♘e7 13 ♖d2 ♘g6 14 ♗g3 ♗e7 15 ♖hd1 with a comfortable advantage, as 15...♗g5 is well met by 16 f4! ♘xf4 17 h4 ♘d3+ 18 cxd3 ♗xd2+ 19 ♔xd2 when the two minor pieces are far more useful than the rook and pawn.

b) 7...♗g4 8 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 was tried in E.Andreev-R.Nechepurenko, Dubna 2007. I'd like to keep the knight here with 9 ♘e5 followed by attacking Black's vulnerable queenside pawns with, for example, 9...♗h5 10 ♗e3 e6 11 f3 f6 12 ♘c4 b5 13 ♘a5 when a subsequent a2-a4 is going to weaken Black's queenside even further.

8 ♗f4

Covering the c7-square before playing ♘f3-e5.

8 ♘e5 ♕c7 9 ♕xd7+ ♕xd7 10 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 was preferred in A.Romero Holmes-V.Bologan, Pamplona 2003, but didn't promise White anything in the endgame and indeed Black went on to win.

8...♘e7 9 ♘e5

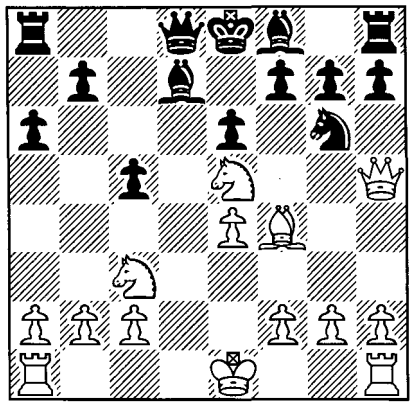
Taking possession over the centre and forcing Black to watch out on his f7-square.

9...♘g6

An improvement over 9...♗b5 which gave White a great position after 10 ♕h5 g6?! 11 ♕f3 ♘c6 in M.Adams-Bu Xiangzhi, Yerevan (rapid) 2008, when perhaps the strongest is 12 ♘xb5 (as Vigorito points out, White can also snaffle a pawn with 12 ♘xf7!? ♘d4 13 ♘xd8 ♘xf3+ 14 gxf3 ♖xd8 15 ♗e5, although here Black has some drawing chances) 12...axb5 13 ♘xc6 bxc6 14 ♗e5 ♖g8 15 0-0 and Black can barely move. Instead 10...♘g6 should have been played, but this is a good version of the game for White.

Note too that 9...g6? would be a logical move, but fails to 10 ♕f3! ♗g7 11 ♘xf7!.

10 ♕h5!



A definite improvement over 10 ♗g5 ♕c7 11 ♕xd7+ ♕xd7 12 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 as offered by Adams as equal. Ni Hua's move certainly puts more pressure on Black.

10...♗c6

The bishop cannot of course be taken, and 10...♘xe5 is legal, but it's hard to find a constructive move for Black after 11 ♗xe5 while White can complete his development.

11 ♗g3

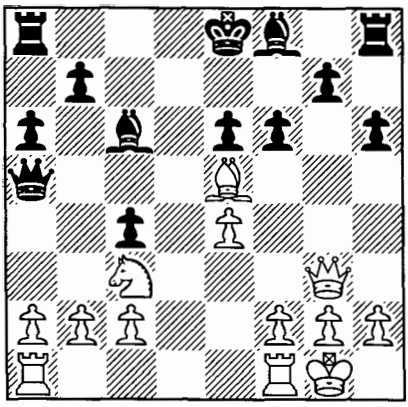
Ni Hua tries to keep up the initiative, but it doesn't pay off. I think White should deviate here with 11 ♘xg6!?, gaining a structural advantage when the game might proceed 11...fxg6 12 ♕g4 ♕f6 13 0-0-0 ♗e7 14 ♗d6 0-0 (14...♕g5+ 15 ♕xg5 ♗xg5+ 16 ♔b1 ♗e7 is also possible, but it's a slightly unpleasant endgame to try and hold after 17 f3) 15 f3 and White is still top dog.

11...♘xe5 12 ♗xe5 c4 13 0-0

13 f4 was a suggestion of Vigorito's that

received a recent outing, but it wasn't very successful for the white player: 13...b5 14 f5 exf5 and now in Xu Yuhua-T.Kosintseva, Jermuk 2010, 15 ♖d1 should have been tried with chances to retain an edge after 15...♕e7 16 ♕xf5 ♕e6 17 ♘d5, although 17...♗xd5 18 ♖xd5 ♕xf5 19 exf5 f6 20 ♗f4 ♖d8 shouldn't cause Black too many problems holding the half-point.

13...♕a5 14 ♕g5 h6 15 ♕g3 f6!



At the cost of a displaced king for a couple of moves, Black manages to unravel. Correctly assessing this type of position is certainly one of the reasons Magnus is so strong.

16 ♕g6+ ♔e7 17 ♗f4 ♗e8 18 ♕g3 ♔f7 19 ♖ad1 ♗c6 20 ♖d2?!

After this Black has the upper hand. Here Ni Hua should have tried Vigorito's suggestion of 20 a3, but it is clear that it is now White who is fighting for equality as Black has the bishop-pair and a secure king.

20...e5 21 ♗e3 ♗b4!

What follows is a master class in converting a small advantage. Carlsen makes Ni Hua look like a beginner.

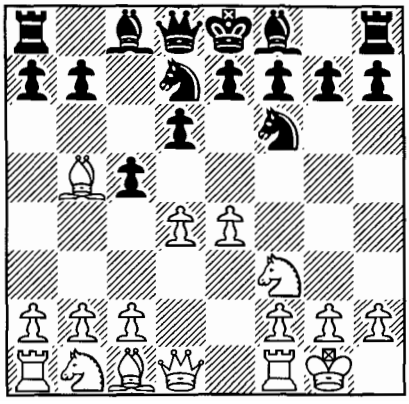
22 f4 ♖he8 23 f5 ♗c5 24 ♖fd1 ♖ad8 25 ♖xd8 ♗xe3+ 26 ♕xe3 ♖xd8 27 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 28 ♔f2 ♕d6

Objectively of course this position is close to a draw, but White still has to play accurately while Black can try a few different things.

29 a3 a5 30 ♔f3 ♔g8 31 g3 b5 32 ♔e2 b4 33 axb4 axb4 34 ♘d1 ♗a4 35 b3 cxb3 36 cxb3 ♕a6+ 37 ♔d2 ♗b5 38 ♕c5 ♕a2+ 39 ♕c2 ♕a7 40 ♕c8+ ♔h7 41 ♔c1 ♕a1+ 42 ♔c2 ♕d4 0-1

Game 6
V.Baklan-J.M.Degraeve
Belgian League 1997

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘d7 4 d4 ♘gf6 5 0-0



5...♘xe4?!

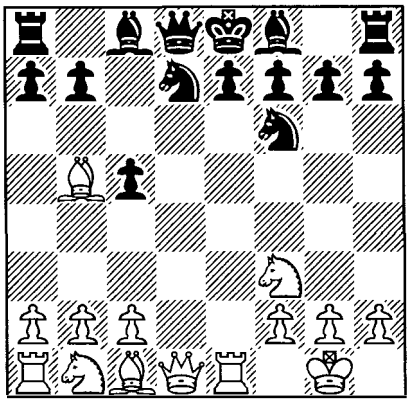
The critical test of White's opening, but practical encounters haven't been encouraging for Black. The move has been surprisingly popular with 8 players over 2500 happy to defend the black side and Joe Gallagher even suggested it as a possible black weapon in his excellent *Beating the Anti-Sicilians*, but time hasn't been friendly to the move.

6 ♖e1 ♘ef6

Black would like to take the centre with 6...d5, but 7 c4! looks like a good response when Black's centre is collapsing: 7...a6

(7...e6 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♘c3 picks up the d5-pawn and much more besides) 8 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 (8...♕xd7 9 dxc5 regains the pawn with a good position) 9 cxd5 ♗f5 10 dxc5 ♘xc5 11 ♘c3 and Black has severe problems developing.

7 dxc5 dxc5



8 ♗c4

Targeting f7 looks to be the best way to proceed. However, I wonder if 8 ♘g5! might be the most accurate move order:

a) 8...e6 was played in a very early encounter in this line, R.Balinas-E.Torre, Manila 1977, and now White could transpose back to the game while avoiding Black's 8th-move alternative with 9 ♗c4!.

b) 8...h6 must be critical, but White has a huge initiative after 9 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 10 ♗c4+ ♔e8. This was mooted by Richard Palliser, but now I think 11 ♘c3! is stronger than his 11 ♕d3 when 11...♕c7 12 ♘c3 a6 isn't so clear.

This leaves Black struggling to develop. White's main idea is ♕d3-g6+, while ♘b5-d6 is also problematic. For example:

b1) 11...g5 is well met by 12 ♕d3!.

b2) 11...a6 12 ♗f4 ♕b6 13 ♕d3 g5 14 ♗g3 and it's easy to see that White's mammoth pressure must be worth far more than a piece. Indeed, I don't see how Black manages to coordinate his pieces at all.

b3) 11...♕c7? now loses to 12 ♘b5.

b4) 11...♕b6 12 ♖e6! ♕b4 13 ♘b5! also looks lost for Black.

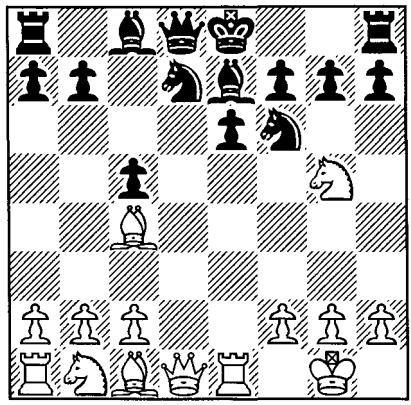
b5) 11...e5 and here White can either keep up the pressure with a huge initiative or retrieve the piece with 12 f4 ♗e7 13 fxe5 ♘xe5 14 ♖xe5 ♕xd1+ 15 ♘xd1, with a continued moderate advantage.

8 ♗g5 as played in P.Velicka-J.Stocek, Czech League 1998, has also received decent results, but I like the idea of pressurising f7 when should Black err, he'll lose in the opening.

8...e6

8...h6 is probably the only way Black can play this line, but he has to soak up a lot of pressure: 9 ♗f4 ♕b6?! (this is too ambitious; Black had to start developing his kingside) 10 ♘c3 a6 was the course of J.Strasser-D.Bischoff, Bad Wörishofen 2008, and here 11 ♕d3! was very strong with the idea of 11...e6 12 ♗xe6! fxe6 13 ♕g6+ ♔d8 14 ♖ad1 ♗e7 15 ♘e5 with a winning attack.

9 ♘g5 ♗e7



10 ♗xe6!

10 ♘xf7!? was attempted in T.Eckersley Waites-M.Burrows, British League 2007,

which looks very interesting, but White can get a large advantage without sacrificing anything.

10...0-0

10...fxe6?! 11 ♘xe6 ♕b6 12 ♕e2!, as given by Gary Lane, leaves Black in a lot of trouble. I think he's forced to play 12...♘e5 13 ♕xe5 ♕xe6 14 ♕xe6 ♗xe6 15 ♖xe6, but then he is simply a pawn down.

11 ♕e2!

The bishop doesn't have to be moved yet.

11...♘b6 12 ♗xc8 ♘xc8

Black has survived the initial onslaught, but his pieces are yet to coordinate, whereas White has very easy play taking the centre.

13 ♘c3 h6 14 ♘ge4 ♘xe4 15 ♕xe4 ♘d6?? 1-0

A surprising error by a Grandmaster but evidently he couldn't handle the constant pressure and he chose to resign before 16 ♕xe7.

Instead 15...♕d7 16 ♗f4, as given by Lane, is terrible for Black: 16...♕c6 (or 16...♗f6 17 ♘d5!) 17 ♕xc6 bxc6 18 ♖ad1 ♗f6 19 ♗e5 ♗xe5 20 ♖xe5 and at least one c-pawn will drop with a technically lost position.

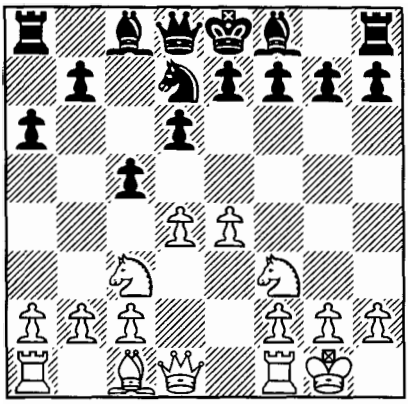
Thus 15...♗f6 is the top suggestion of the computer, but this allows White an extra pawn: 16 ♕xb7 ♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♘b6 18 ♗f4 and thanks to White's weakened queenside, Black has some drawing chances, although White's definitely on top.

Game 7
A.Lastin-V.Popov
St Petersburg 2009

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘d7 4 0-0 ♘gf6 5 d4 a6

This has been the choice of many strong players of late. Black forces the exchange before swapping on d4.

6 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 7 ♘c3



As is usually the case, it's better to play this rather than c2-c4, since Black has lost further time, i.e. by having to play ...♘f6xd7.

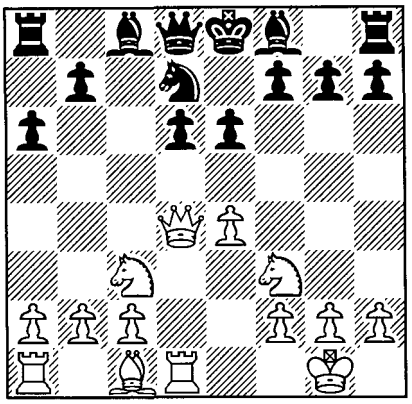
7...e6

7...cxd4 doesn't make so much sense now that Black has been forced to capture on d7 with the knight, but is also tried from time to time. Then 8 ♕xd4 and now:

a) 8...♕b6 has been Kempinski's choice a few times, but following 9 ♗e3 ♕xd4 10 ♗xd4 e6 11 a4 Black is under pressure as White still had his development advantage and positional trump with the b6-square, while Black has problems bringing his remaining pieces out: 11...f6 (perhaps 11...b6 should be tried, although 12 ♘d2! ♗b7 13 ♘c4 ♖c8 14 b3! is pleasant for White) 12 ♘d2 g5 13 ♘c4 ♘e5 14 ♘b6 ♖b8 when the positional maestro playing White continued 15 f3 ♖g8 16 ♔h1 ♗e7 17 g3 ♘d7 18 ♖ad1 ♗d8 19 ♘c4 ♗c7 in E.Rozentalis-R.Kempinski, Zakopane 2000, and here 20 a5 intending 21 ♘a4 looks very strong.

b) 8...e6 has been played most of the time, but 9 ♖d1!, as recommended by Gal-

lagher, Kaufman and Palliser is rather strong.

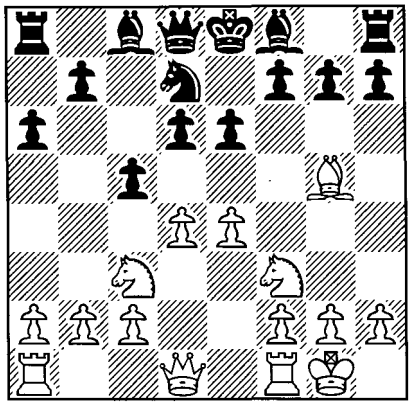


b1) 9...♕c7? is already a losing mistake, due to 10 ♗f4! e5 11 ♘d5 ♕b8 (11...♕c6 12 ♗xe5! dxe5 13 ♘xe5, as pointed out by Palliser, is winning, in view of 13...♕c5 14 ♘xd7! ♕xd4 15 ♖xd4 and whichever way d7 is taken the rook drops in the corner) 12 ♕c3 exf4 13 ♘c7+ ♔d8 as in V.Tkachiev-A.Suhendra, Jakarta 1996, and here the most accurate finish was 14 ♘g5! ♘e5 15 ♘xa8 as now the e5 knight is en-prise. Then 15...f6 16 ♘b6 leaves White with an extra exchange.

b2) 9...♕b6 has also been tried a few times, but after 10 ♕xb6 ♘xb6 11 ♗f4 e5 12 ♗e3 ♘c4 13 ♘d5 ♘xe3 in P.Velicka-G.Szabo, Austrian League 2009, 14 ♘xe3 would have left Black in a rather uninspiring position, where he has a defect on d5 without any notable pluses.

b3) 9...f6 has the best reputation when the simplest approach appears to be to target the d6-pawn with the 10 b3 ♕c7 11 ♗a3 ♘c5 12 b4! ♘d7 13 b5 ♘c5 14 ♖ab1 ♗e7 15 b6 ♕c6 of T.Oral-F.Janz, German League 2002, when the classic rerouting manoeuvre 16 ♘d2! gave White a beautiful position. Here 10 a4 has also scored well for White; a recent example being 10...♕c7 11 ♗e3 ♗e7 12 h3 (John Shaw's 12 a5 also looks very logical) 12...♖b8 13 ♕a7! 0-0 14 a5 ♗d8 15 ♗b6! ♕c6 16 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 17 ♘d4 ♕c4 18 ♘a4 ♔f7 19 b3 ♕c7 20 ♘b6 ♘c5 21 f3 when White completed dominated, although 21...d5? 22 ♘c6!? didn't help Black's cause in A.Skripchenko-N.Benmesbah, Pau 2008.

8 ♗g5!



This is the critical test of Black's opening play.

8...♕c7

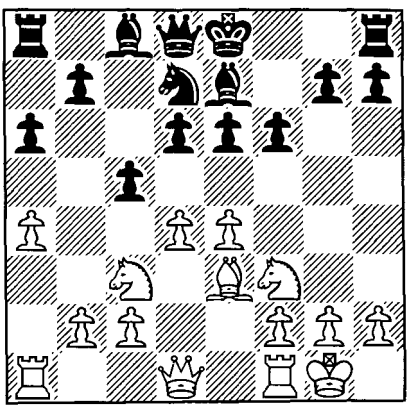
Alternatively:

a) 8...♕b6 is a very rare try. I think White should continue with 9 d5 as in the game, even though it doesn't appear to have been played before. Moreover, taking the pawn looks very risky: 9...♕xb2 10 ♕d3 e5 (10...♕b6 11 dxe6 fxe6 12 ♖fd1 looks like good compensation to me as Black struggles to complete his development) 11 a4 (initially I wanted to recommend the tactical 11 ♖fb1 ♕a3 12 ♘d2, but I'm not totally convinced by 12...b5 13 ♖xb5!? axb5 14 ♘xb5 ♕a5 15 ♘c4! ♕xb5 16 ♘xd6+ ♗xd6 17 ♕xb5 ♖a6, which the computer assesses as better for White but due to the material imbalance I can't be sure) 11...♕b6 12 a5 ♕c7 13 ♘d2 when White will follow up with ♘d2-c4, ♖f1-b1 and the bind on the

queenside must be worth a pawn, as Black really struggles to obtain any counterplay.

b) 8...♗e7 is the logical response, but White now claims the advantage with 9 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 10 dxc5 ♘xc5 (or 10...dxc5 when although everyone has played 11 e5, perhaps this move should be delayed so that the bishop does not become so powerful on b7; I suggest 11 ♖e1 0-0 12 ♕d3 b5 13 ♖ad1 with a small advantage thanks to White's central control, while he is threatening 14 ♕d6 against most black moves, as in the endgame it will prove difficult to defend a6 and c5) 11 ♕d4 0-0 12 ♖ad1 ♖d8, as in I.Glek-M.Langer, Internet (blitz) 2000, and here the most accurate appears to be 13 ♘e5! followed by 14 ♘c4 with a clear advantage.

c) 8...f6 looks unnatural, but has been the choice of a few strong players and is actually quite a solid option. After 9 ♗e3 ♗e7 I think White should proceed with 10 a4:

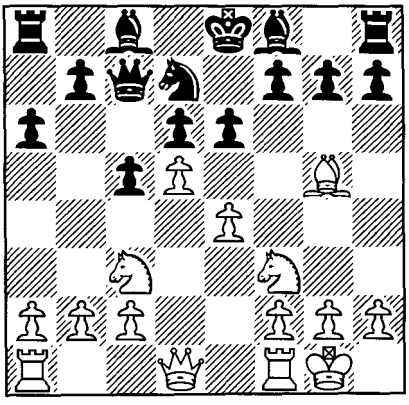


c1) 10...cxd4 11 ♘xd4 ♘e5 12 ♕h5+ g6 13 ♕h3 is exceedingly risky for Black.

c2) 10...0-0, as seen in Y.Shabanov-V.Litvinov, Elista 2002, is probably stronger, although I think White has a pleasant bind following 11 d5 e5 (11...♘e5 12 ♘xe5 fxe5 13 dxe6 ♗xe6 14 ♘d5 is comfortably better for White) 12 ♕d3, dissuading both the ...b7-b5 and ...f7-f5 breaks. We could continue with ♘d2-c4, a4-a5, f2-f3 and then try forcing through b2-b4.

c3) 10...b6 11 d5 e5 was tried in Z.Hracek-R.Kempinski, Czech League 2008. Here 12 ♘h4!? looks like a fresh plan: 12...0-0 (12...g6 13 ♗h6 is rather risky) 13 ♘f5 g6 14 ♕g4 with the start of a strong attack, as shown by, for example, 14...♔h8 15 ♗h6 ♖g8 16 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 17 f4!, threatening to push forward with f4-f5 and create a further bind. However, if Black reacts with 17...exf4, trying to get the strong e5-outpost for his knight, then after 18 ♕e6! ♕xe6 (18...♖e8 19 ♕xe7 ♖xe7 20 ♗xf4 ♘e5 21 ♗xe5 fxe5 22 ♖f6 leaves Black in a dreadful endgame) 19 dxe6 ♘e5 20 e7! g5 21 ♘d5 the e7-pawn is a major asset.

9 d5



So Black no longer has the opportunity to exchange on d4.

9...e5

Now the position resembles some sort of Old Indian or Czech Benoni, but with White's pawn on c2 which gives him additional options, notably to use the c4-square for a knight. Black's counterplay centres around his two pawn breaks, ...b7-b5 and ...f7-f5. Therefore White's next is forced.

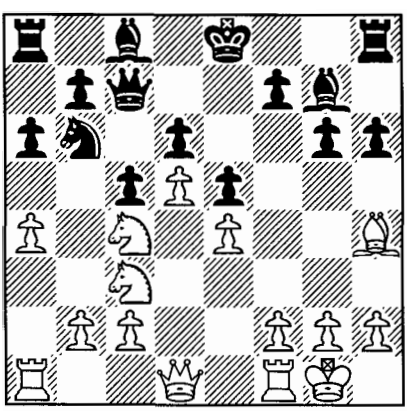
10 a4 h6

This has been the most common, forcing White to decide which diagonal he wants his bishop to be on. Otherwise:

a) 10...b6 has also been tried, but it probably just allows White further options: 11 ♘d2 h6 12 ♗e3! (the bishop no longer has to retreat to h4) 12...♗e7 13 f4! exf4 14 ♗xf4 ♘e5 15 ♗xe5 dxe5 16 ♘c4 ♗d6 17 ♕h5 0-0 18 ♖f3 ♖b8 19 ♖af1 and White's knights totally dominated Black's bishops, G.Vescovi-S.Karjakin, Moscow 2002.

b) 10...g6 is likely to end up in a similar position to the game. Indeed, after 11 ♘d2 ♗g7 12 ♘c4 ♘b6, with 13 ♘e3 play will probably transpose to the game, although Glek decided to try and exploit the fact the bishop was still on g5 with 13 ♘xb6!? ♕xb6 14 a5 ♕c7 (14...♕xb2? 15 ♕d2 and the black queen won't survive) 15 ♕d2 0-0 16 ♘a4 f5 17 ♘b6 ♖b8 18 f3 when the knight on b6 was the most relevant feature in I.Glek-N.Belichev, Cappelle la Grande 1998. Here 13 ♘a3!? is certainly also an option.

11 ♗h4 g6 12 ♘d2! ♗g7 13 ♘c4 ♘b6



14 ♘e3

Here e3 is a good square for the knight as it slows down Black's only remaining pawn break. 14 ♘a3 was the sneaky choice of Kornev, which worked out extremely well as his opponent immediately blundered with 14...0-0?, allowing the surprising 15 a5 ♘d7 16 ♗e7! when suddenly the grandmaster playing Black noticed that 16...♖e8 17 ♘ab5! traps his queen. He struggled on with 16...♕xa5, but after 17 ♘c4 ♕c7 18 ♘xd6 ♖d8 19 ♘cb5! had to resign in A.Kornev-E.Vorobiov, Tula 2002. Instead 14...♗d7 should be preferred, although White is still doing well after 15 a5 ♘c8 16 ♘c4 b5 17 axb6 ♘xb6 18 ♘a5 ♘a4 19 ♘xa4 ♕xa5 20 b3 ♕b4 21 f3, as given by Palliser, when Black struggles for counterplay, while White can put pressure on the queenside. Palliser notes too that a bid for activity with 21...c4? fails to 22 ♗e1!.

14...0-0 15 g4!?

Depriving Black of ...f7-f5 for good and a common ploy in the King's Indian. White takes the opportunity to drum up an initiative on the kingside. This position was reached in another high-ranking match-up. There Topalov continued 15 a5 ♘d7 16 ♕d3 b5!? (this creates a weakness on a6) 17 axb6 ♘xb6 18 g4!? (as in the game Topalov decides he doesn't want to allow counterplay with the ...f7-f5 break) 18...a5 19 ♘b5 ♕d7 20 c4 a4 21 b3 axb3 22 ♖xa8 ♘xa8 23 ♖a1 ♗b7 24 ♕xb3 and White had taken control in V.Topalov-S.Karjakin, Dubai (rapid) 2002.

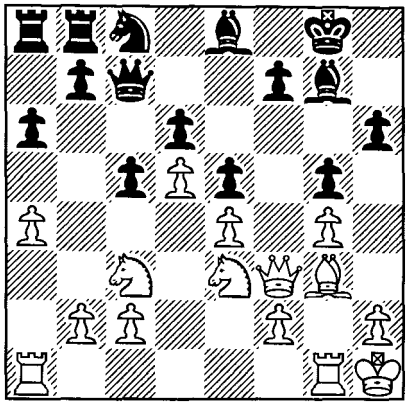
15...♗d7

Black's position is rather unpleasant, as he is being tied down on both sides of the board. Popov plays well and manages to hold the draw, but Lastin certainly had good chances.

16 ♔h1

Preparing a g-file invasion, although 16 ♕f3!? also looked interesting, intending ♗f6 next move, continuing to put Black under pressure.

16...♖fb8 17 ♖g1 ♗e8 18 ♕f3 g5 19 ♗g3 ♘c8



20 h4

This gives Black enough time to generate counterplay on the other side and a draw becomes the logical result. Instead 20 a5, first restraining Black, would have been stronger. Black must proceed with 20...b5, otherwise he gets no counterplay, but 21 axb6 ♘xb6 and only now 22 h4 looks good for White. Now that we've provoked ...g5, we should move across to the h-file with ♔h1-g2, ♖g1-h1 and exchange on g5 when we're making real progress. Meanwhile it's tough to see what Black will do as we're holding up the queenside successfully.

20...b5! 21 hxg5 hxg5 22 axb5

Now everything gets exchanged. Instead 22 a5 was a better winning try when I'd still prefer White.

22...axb5 23 ♘f5 b4 24 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 25 ♘d1 ♖a1 26 ♘de3 ♖xg1+ 27 ♔xg1 f6 28 c3 bxc3 29 bxc3 ♗f8 30 ♗h2 ♗g6 ½-½

And as White isn't getting anywhere on the kingside, a draw was agreed.

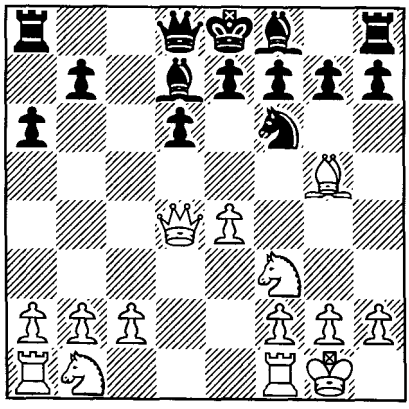
Game 8
V.Ivanchuk-G.Kasparov
Linares 1991

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘d7 4 d4 ♘gf6 5 0-0 cxd4 6 ♕xd4 a6 7 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7

Having first exchanged on d4, Black can now recapture with the bishop on d7.

7...♘xd7 8 ♘c3 would transpose to the notes to Black's 7th move in the previous game, Lastin-Popov.

8 ♗g5



8 c4 has also been tried, but I think this is inaccurate as Black can react with 8...g6! 9 ♘c3 ♗g7 10 ♖e1 0-0 and in S.Tiviakov-V.Ivanchuk, Montreal 2007, Black had a decent Accelerated Dragon position.

8...h6

This move fell out of fashion after Kasparov got destroyed in this game.

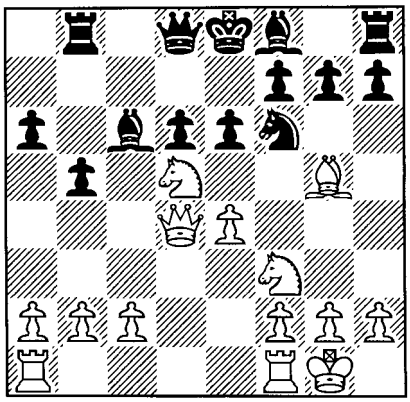
8...e6 has been Black's recent try when we could do well to follow Rublevsky's games. The strong Russian is an expert in this line and here he came up with the slightly surprising 9 ♘bd2! in order to put pressure on d6. Following 9...♗c6 (White's plan is revealed after 9...♗e7 10 ♘c4! ♗b5 11 ♗xf6 gxf6 12 a4 ♗xc4 13 ♕xc4 ♖c8 14 ♕b3 ♕c7 15 ♘d4 and White has an edge thanks to his safer king, E.Maljutin-S.Shipov, Minsk 1993) White has a choice:

a) 10 ♘c4 with a further divide:

a1) 10...♗xe4 11 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 12 ♕xe4 d5 13 ♕e2 dxc4 14 ♖ad1!? (14 ♕xc4 ♗e7 15 c3 0-0 16 ♖ad1 ♖fd8 17 ♕e4 is a fraction bet-

ter for White thanks to Black's vulnerable queenside) 14...♖d8?! was played in S.Maze-J.Campos Moreno, Andorra 2005 (14...♗e7 15 ♕xc4 0-0 should have been preferred, transposing back into the previous note). Here the straightforward 15 ♕xc4 ♗d6 16 ♕a4+ ♔e7 17 c4 would have given White a pleasant edge.

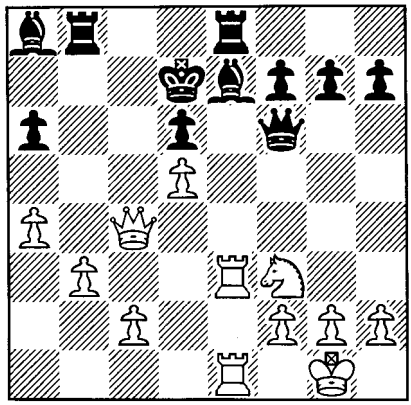
a2) 10...b5 is the critical test when 11 ♘b6!? was Rublevsky's latest attempt, an enterprising piece sacrifice. The idea is 11...♖b8 12 ♘d5.



Here 12...exd5 (12...♗e7 was played in the only practical example, but White had a great position after 13 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 14 ♖ad1 h6 15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 ♖fe1 ♖d8 17 ♕d2 in S.Rublevsky-N.Misailovic, Budva 2004) 13 exd5 ♗b7 14 ♖fe1+ ♔d7 reaches another of these crazy positions a piece down, although you'll be relieved to know the computer prefers White here! Of course if you don't feel comfortable playing a piece down for a strong initiative then you can prefer variation 'b'. After 15 a4 (15 c4!? is Palliser's suggestion) we have:

a21) 15...♗e7 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♕d3! ♕c7 (17...♕b6 18 ♗e3) 18 ♘d4! gives White a very strong initiative. One possible continuation runs 18...♘xd5 19 ♘xb5 ♕c5 20 ♕f5+ ♔d8 21 ♗xe7+! ♘xe7 22 ♕xc5 dxc5 23 ♖ad1+ ♗d5 24 ♘c3 ♖xb2 25 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 26 ♖xd5+ ♔c7 27 ♖xc5+ which actually leaves White a pawn up in the endgame.

a22) Black should probably keep the position closed with 15...b4 when a line could run 16 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 17 ♕g4+ ♔c7 18 ♕xb4 ♗a8 19 ♕c4+ ♔d7 20 ♖a3 ♗e7 21 ♖ae3 ♖he8 22 b3.



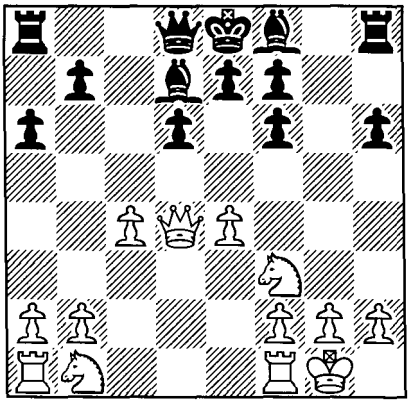
White has picked up a couple of pawns for the piece with a very solid position and Black will constantly have to be on the look out for his king's safety. I think White has very good chances here as we even have good positional compensation with the a8-bishop blocked out.

b) 10 ♖ad1 ♗e7 11 ♘c4 has also been tested by Rublevsky once, and looks like an interesting alternative:

b1) 11...0-0 12 ♖fe1 d5! 13 exd5 ♘xd5 14 ♕e5 ♗xg5 15 ♘xg5 and White had the slightly more comfortable position, before Black blundered with 15...b5?, allowing 16 ♘xe6! fxe6 17 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 18 ♕xc6 bxc4 19 ♖xd5 ♕b8 20 ♖de5 ♖d8 21 g3 and 1-0 in S.Rublevsky-E.Vorobiov, Krasnoyarsk 2003. Here 15...♕f6!? is Psakhis' suggestion, although White retains a comfortable position after 16 ♘e4 ♕xe5 17 ♘xe5, so perhaps Palliser's 15...♕e7 is better but White still holds a nibble.

b2) 11...b5!? is critical when White has a choice between a fractionally better endgame with 12 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 13 ♕xd6 ♗xd6 14 ♖xd6 ♗xe4 15 ♘d4 and the more dynamic 12 ♗xf6 gxf6 13 ♘e3, which reaches a tricky position for both sides. Palliser recommends White should improve his position with a plan of ♕d4-d3, ♘f3-d4 and c2-c4.

9 ♗xf6 gxf6 10 c4



10...e6

Here Black only plays ...e6 once we have committed to c2-c4, so we don't have the plan of ♘d2-c4.

Instead 10...♗g7 was tried in a recent game which proved successful for Black, but I think White still has the better chances: 11 ♘c3 0-0 12 ♖ad1!? (12 ♕d3 would be a sensible alternative, not allowing Black the freeing move ...f6-f5) 12...f5 13 e5 ♗c6 14 ♕e3 ♗xf3 and now in Ni Hua-Zhao Jun Danzhou 2010, White got a bit carried away with 15 gxf3!?. Instead a safer way to proceed would have been 15 exd6 ♗xd1 16 dxe7 ♕c7 17 exf8♕+ ♖xf8 18 ♖xd1 ♕xc4 19 h3, leaving Black in an unpleasant simplified middlegame due to the weakness of his king.

11 ♘c3 ♖c8

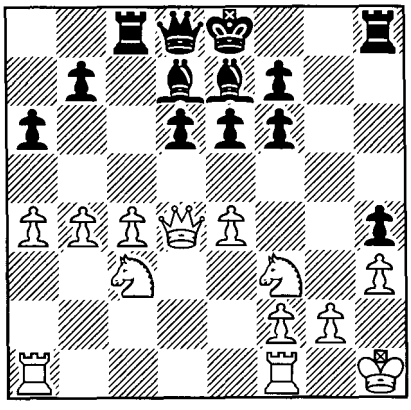
True to form, Kasparov goes for the most aggressive possibility.

11...♗e7 has also been tried when 12 ♖fe1 (Palliser recommends 12 ♕d3!? with plans of ♖ac1 and b2-b4 or even ♘f3-d4 and f4-f5) 12...♖c8 13 a4 ♕c7 14 b3 ♕c5 15 ♕d2 h5 is given as fine for Black by Palliser, although I think White is still a little better and, indeed, after the game continuation 16 ♖ad1 ♖c7 17 ♘d4 h4 18 ♖e3! ♗f8 19 f4 h3 20 g3 ♖g8 21 ♕f2 ♗h6 Black had to exploit his extra 160 rating points to obtain a draw in P.Velicka-Z.Hracek, Opava 2000, just when 22 ♖ed3 ♖g4 23 f5! was looking very unpleasant for him.

12 ♔h1

Prophylaxis. Kasparov will be attacking down the g-file so Ivanchuk decides to get his king off the line. More recently White has played the simple developing move 12 ♖ac1 with a sample game continuing 12...h5 13 ♖fd1 h4 14 h3 ♗e7 15 b4 ♕c7 16 ♕e3 ♖h5 17 ♘e2 ♗f8 18 ♘h2 ♗a4 19 ♘g4 ♗e7 20 ♖d2 f5 21 exf5 ♖xf5 22 ♕c3 ♕d8 23 c5 d5 24 ♘d4 and White's knights had taken control in 'Ciron'-'Schurick', Internet (freestyle) 2006.

12...h5 13 a4 h4 14 h3 ♗e7 15 b4



So Black's play on the kingside has come to naught, while White has started up a pleasant initiative on the queenside.

15...a5 16 b5 ♕c7

16...♖c5 was Bönsch's suggestion, but I don't really see where the rook is going: for example, 17 ♘d1 ♖g8 18 ♘e3 and Black is running out of constructive moves.

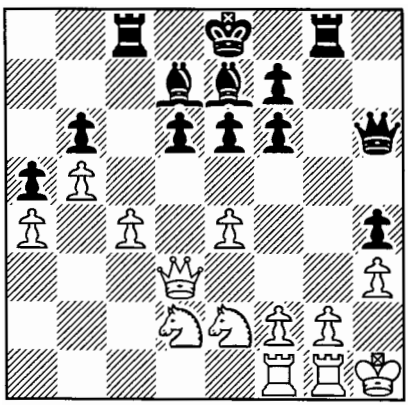
17 ♘d2 ♕c5 18 ♕d3 ♖g8 19 ♖ae1 ♕g5

19...b6 has been suggested by Anand. I think White should continue here by re-routing his knight around to e3 with 20 ♘d1 when Black's ...f6-f5 break will be much harder to achieve.

20 ♖g1

Black has only a temporary initiative and Ivanchuk now gives a good demonstration of how to push Black's pieces back. The major problem for Black is that his bishops are blocked in by his own pawns and his king is stuck in the centre. A strong plan for White in these structures is to get in f4-f5 when following an exchange on e6, Black's king will prove more vulnerable and the pawn on e6 will also be a weakness. Of course Black does not want to play ...e6-e5 as then d5 becomes a beautiful outpost.

20...♕f4 21 ♖ef1 b6 22 ♘e2 ♕h6



23 c5!?

The eccentric Ukrainian comes up with an interesting pawn sacrifice. 23 f4, as suggested by Bönsch, is a safer choice when White undoubtedly has the advantage, as we can continue with our plan of 24 f5 when Black is being driven backwards.

23...♖xc5?!

This gives back the pawn and leaves Kasparov in a hopeless position. Thus 23...dxc5 had to be tried: 24 ♘c4 ♖b8 and here maybe White shouldn't rush, but play simply 25 f4 ♗c8 26 f5 with great compensation, although it's debatable if the pawn sacrifice was objectively correct as White had such a great position before it.

24 ♘c4

Now b6 is dropping, after which the position is completely lost for Black.

24...♔f8 25 ♘xb6 ♗e8 26 f4

26 ♖c1! also looks very strong as Black's pieces can't get back to the queenside.

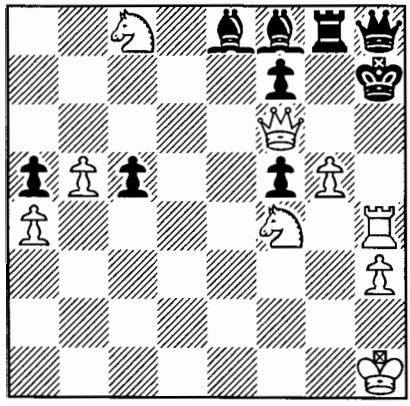
26...f5 27 exf5 ♖xf5 28 ♖c1 ♔g7? 29 g4!?

White is attacking on both fronts, but 29 ♘c8! was even stronger as Black must give up a piece to stop the b-pawn.

29...♖c5 30 ♖xc5 dxc5 31 ♘c8 ♗f8 32 ♕d8 ♕g6 33 f5 ♕h6 34 g5

Ivanchuk doesn't need his asset on the b-file.

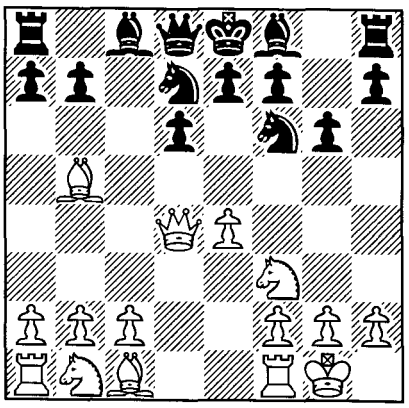
34...♕h5 35 ♖g4 exf5 36 ♘f4 ♕h8 37 ♕f6+ ♔h7 38 ♖xh4+ 1-0



A depressing final position for probably the strongest player of all time, with his king and queen trapped in the corner.

Game 9
S.Rublevsky-Ye Jiangchuan
Moscow 2004

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘d7 4 d4 ♘gf6 5 0-0 cxd4 6 ♕xd4 g6!?



This ambitious plan to play a Dragon-style position has received some interest of late.

7 e5!

We must undertake something concrete before Black completes his development, otherwise he will just stand well.

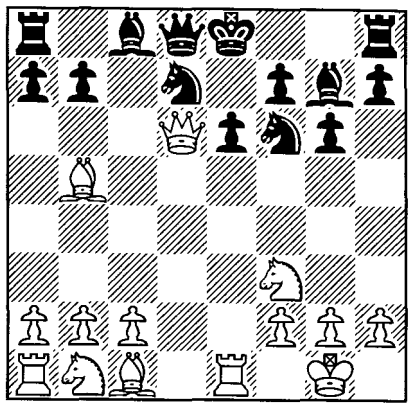
7...dxe5 8 ♕xe5

I think this is the strongest method of recapturing the pawn. Instead 8 ♘xe5 ♗g7 9 ♖d1 0-0 10 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 11 ♕a4 ♘c5 12 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 13 ♕f4 ♖d1+ 14 ♗f1 ♘e6 15 ♕e3 ♗d4 16 ♕e2 ♖xc1 is quite a critical line and was seen in the recent game G.Antal-R.Robson, Lubbock 2009, in which Black seemed to stand well.

8...♗g7 9 ♖e1 e6

9...a6 has also been tried a couple of times, but 10 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 11 ♗g5 0-0 12 ♕xe7 ♕xe7 13 ♖xe7 ♗c6 14 ♘c3 ♖fe8 as in J.Michalek-I.Hausner, Czech Championship 1991, and then 15 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 16 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 17 ♖e1 would have left Black fighting for the half point.

10 ♕d6



White's advantage here lies in the fact that Black has not quite managed to complete his development. Therefore we should try to pester him at every opportunity. Black has two attempts to remove the queen from d6: either he offers a queen exchange or else he plays ...♗g7-f8 to expel the queen.

10...a6

Black generally kicks the bishop back initially.

Instead 10...♗f8 (V.Baklan-D.Gormally, Ostend 2005) 11 ♕f4 ♗g7 12 ♘c3 is likely to transpose to note 'a' to Black's 11th move, below, while 10...♕e7 11 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 12 ♘bd2 will probably transpose back to the game after 12...a6 13 ♗f1.

11 ♗f1 ♕e7

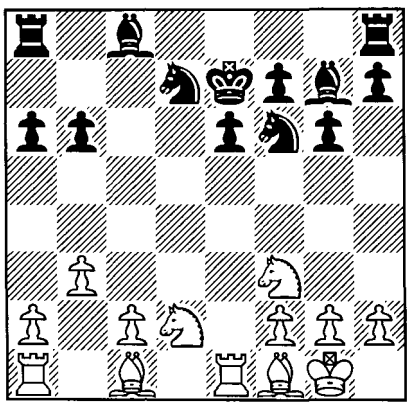
Alternatively:

a) Surprisingly the position after 11...♗f8 has been reached six times in the *Mega Database* and five of those have been agreed drawn after various repetitions. 12 ♕f4 ♗g7 was seen in A.Kornev-P.Anisimov, Sochi 2007, when I think the simplest way to keep the advantage is 13 ♘c3 (of course White can also offer a repetition with 13 ♕d6) 13...0-0 14 ♗e3 b5 15 a4! and White's

queenside pressure is enough for the advantage.

b) The 11...♕b6 of R.Mogranzini-M.Suba, Malaga 2009, is an alternative way to trade queens, but 12 ♗f4 ♕xd6 13 ♗xd6 ♗f8 14 ♗g3 ♗e7 15 c4 would have kept a small advantage, as it's still not easy to complete Black's development and in the meantime White can grab space on the queenside.

12 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 13 ♘bd2 b6 14 b3!



White still has the advantage thanks to Black's awkward king position and the weakness of the d6-square.

14...♔f8

Running with the king in the hope of finding security on the kingside, but this gives White some important tempi to take control of the centre.

14...♘d5 was played the first time this position was reached, but after 15 ♗a3+ ♘c5 16 ♖ad1 ♗c3 in S.Rublevsky-F.Bistric, Bled Olympiad 2002, White would have had a clear advantage had he found 17 ♘c4! ♗xe1 18 ♘xe1 (the threat of 19 ♘xb6 cannot be parried) 18...♖b8 19 ♘xb6 ♘xb6 20 ♗xc5+ ♔f6 21 ♗d4+! e5 22 ♗b2 ♗f5 23 ♘f3 ♘d7 24 ♘xe5 (regaining the sacrificed material) 24...♘xe5 25 f4 ♔e7 26 ♗xe5 ♖bd8 27 ♗d4 when the bishop and two pawns are more than a match for the rook.

15 ♘c4 ♔g8

Or 15...♘d5 16 ♗a3+ ♔g8 17 ♘ce5! ♘xe5 18 ♘xe5 and White is definitely on top.

16 ♗a3 ♗b7 17 ♘fe5

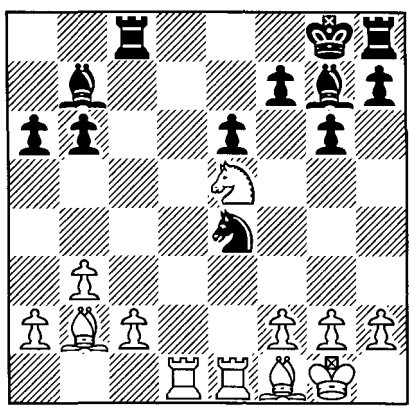
17 ♘g5!? is an interesting option. The idea is that 17...h6? is met by 18 ♘xf7! so Black will have to go extremely passive to defend the f7-pawn.

Psakhis gives 17...♘e8 18 ♖ad1 ♗d5 19 ♘e4 with a slight advantage, but instead 19 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 20 ♖xd5 exd5 21 ♖e7+ ♔g8 22 ♖xd7 would give White a clear advantage as if the knight is taken then it's checkmate.

17...♘xe5 18 ♘xe5 ♘e4

18...♖d8 19 ♖ad1 ♖xd1 20 ♖xd1 ♘d5 21 ♗b2, as given by Psakhis, is very good for White. Black cannot afford to exchange pieces while he is in effect playing a rook down with the guy on h8 completely out of the game.

19 ♗b2 ♖c8 20 ♖ad1!



A strong move keeping the initiative. Rublevsky correctly calculates that Black doesn't have time to take on c2.

20...♗f6

20...♖xc2 21 ♖d8+ ♗f8 22 ♘xg6! wins material.

20...h5 21 c4 is no better as the seventh

rank and the b6-pawn are two large problems for Black.

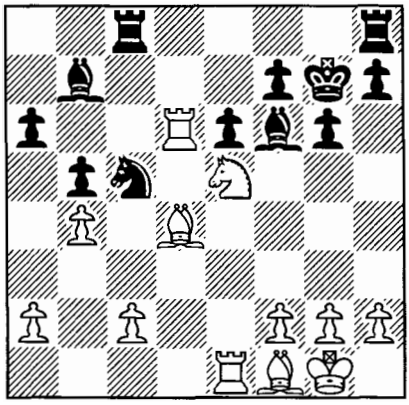
21 ♖d7

21 c4 is also very strong as Black still cannot unleash his h8-rook with 21...♔g7 due to 22 ♖d7.

21...♘c5 22 ♖d6 b5 23 ♗d4! ♔g7?

This just loses. 23...♗d5 was Black's best try, but he's still in a lot of trouble after 24 c4 bxc4 25 bxc4 ♗e4 26 ♖b6! (26 ♗xc5 ♗xe5 isn't so clear) 26...♗a8 27 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 28 ♘d7 ♗c3 29 ♘xc5 ♗xe1 30 ♖xa6 and White's extra pawn should be enough.

24 b4!



Forcing the knight away so that the rook can land on the seventh rank.

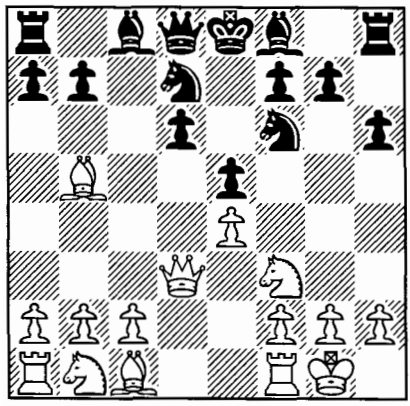
24...♘e4 25 ♖d7 ♖hd8 26 ♖xb7 ♖xd4 27 ♘xf7 ♔g8 28 ♖xe4! ♖xe4 29 ♘d6

Black loses a whole rook. Ye Jiangchuan could have resigned here.

29...♖f4 30 ♘xc8 ♗d4 31 ♘e7+ ♔h8 32 ♘c6 ♗xf2+ 33 ♔h1 1–0

Game 10
S.Rublevsky-Z.Efimenko
Moscow 2003

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘d7 4 d4 ♘gf6 5 0-0 cxd4 6 ♕xd4 e5 7 ♕d3 h6



Black prevents ♗c1-g5.

7...♗e7 is rather similar to the note to Black's 6th move in Bu Xiangzhi-Guseinov. After 8 ♗g5 0-0 9 ♗xd7! again we see this important move capturing the knight before it can jump out to c5, an integral part of our plan once Black has played ...e5. Following 9...♘xd7 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 11 ♘c3 Black has:

a) The 11...♘c5 12 ♘d5 ♕d8 13 ♕e3 f5 14 ♘xe5 f4 15 ♕a3 ♘xe4 16 ♘f3 of G.Sarakauskas-R.Sebe Vodislav, La Fere 2004 was rather unpleasant for Black, as again d5 is a huge outpost and d6 a constant weakness, while the pawn on f4 results solely in Black having a more exposed king.

b) 11...♘f6 improved in R.Fontaine-Y.Benitah, Chalons en Champagne 2010. Black is only a little worse, but he lacks any threatening plan of his own and 12 h3 ♗e6 13 ♖fd1 ♖fd8 14 ♕e3 a6 15 a4 ♖ac8 16 ♖d2 h6 17 ♖ad1 leaves White's position the more pleasant.

8 c4 ♗e7 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 ♗xd7

10 ♗e3!? is an interesting alternative suggested by Palliser, leading after 10...a6 11 ♗a4 to:

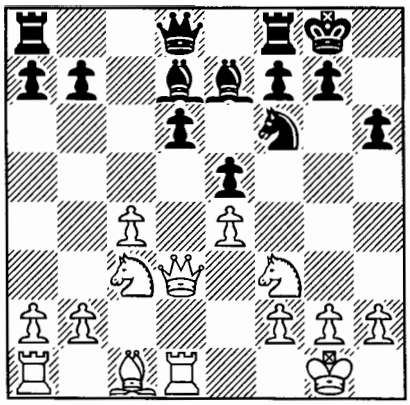
a) 11...♕a5?! allowed 12 b4! ♕c7 (12...♕xb4? fails to 13 ♗xd7! ♗xd7 –

13...♘xd7 14 ♘d5 – 14 ♖fb1 ♕a3 15 ♖b3 ♕a5 16 ♗b6, trapping the queen) 13 ♖ac1 ♘b6 14 ♗b3 ♗g4 15 ♘h4 ♔h8 16 h3 ♗c8 17 ♖fd1 was very pleasant for White in S.Belkhodja-V.Epishin, Nimes 1991.

b) 11...♘b6 is best when Palliser gives the line 12 ♗c2 ♗e6 13 ♘d5 ♘bxd5 14 cxd5 ♗d7 15 ♕b3 b5 in which he prefers White. It's a matter of taste as this type of position more commonly arises from 1 d4.

10...♗xd7 11 ♖d1

11 ♘e1!? is also an interesting try, redeploying the knight to e3 from where it controls the important d5-square.



11...a6

11...♖c8 wouldn't allow White's next, but after 12 b3 a6 13 a4 ♗g4 14 ♗a3 ♖c6 15 h3 ♗h5 in V.Papin-I.Kurnosov, St Petersburg 2009, White missed a tactical opportunity with 16 g4! ♗g6 17 ♘xe5! dxe5 18 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 19 ♗xe7 ♖xd1+ 20 ♖xd1 ♘xe4 21 ♖d8+ ♔h7 22 ♘d5, thereby obtaining a very pleasant endgame.

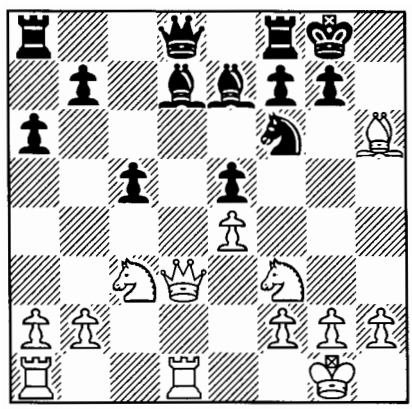
12 c5!?

I like this dynamic option, exploiting the temporary weakness of the d7-bishop, although with best play I think Black can equalize.

12 a4 is an alternative plan and quite an instructive way of developing some pressure on the queenside: 12...♗e6 13 b3 ♕b6?! 14 a5! ♕c7 (14...♕xb3? isn't possible due to 15 ♘d5!) 15 ♗e3 ♖ac8 was seen in A.Negulescu-V.Nevednichy, Eforie Nord 2000. Now I think White should continue 16 ♘h4 ♖fe8 17 ♘f5 ♗xf5 18 exf5 with a pleasant edge due to his control of the light squares.

12...dxc5 13 ♗xh6!

13 ♘xe5 has also been tried once, but shouldn't trouble Black unduly after 13...♗e6 14 ♕g3 ♕b8 (instead Black erred with 14...♕c7? and after 15 ♘g6! ♖fc8 16 ♗f4 it was already time to resign in M.Fischer-W.Kordts, German League 2007) 15 ♗f4 ♘h5! 16 ♘c6 bxc6 17 ♗xb8 ♘xg3 18 ♗xg3 ♖fd8 when I think it will be tricky to exploit Black's doubled c-pawns without allowing counterplay down the b-file.



13...♕c7

The bishop cannot be taken: 13...gxh6? 14 ♘xe5 is the idea when the light-squared bishop drops as 14...♗g4 15 ♕g3 ♕b8 (15...♕c8 16 ♘d5! ♘xd5 17 ♘xg4 wins) 16 ♘d5!? ♔h7 17 ♘xg4 ♕xg3 18 ♘dxf6+ ♗xf6 19 ♘xf6+ ♔g6 20 hxg3 ♔xf6 21 ♖d7 leaves White with a winning endgame.

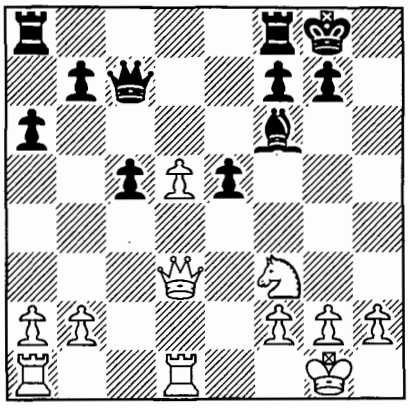
Instead 13...c4 is Palliser's suggestion and has been seen in a couple of practical examples.

a) 14 ♕xc4 would now allow Black to take the bishop.

b) 14 ♕d2 allows Black at least a draw after 14...gxh6 15 ♘xe5! ♗g4 (15...♗e6 16 ♕xh6 ♕c7 17 ♕g5+ ♔h8 is a rather risky attempt for more) 16 ♕xh6 ♗xd1 17 ♖xd1 ♕e8 18 ♕g5+ ♔h8 19 ♖d7 ♘xd7 20 ♕h5+ ♔g8 21 ♕g4+ and it's perpetual.

c) I think we should try 14 ♕e2! ♕c7 15 ♗g5 ♗e6 16 ♘d5 ♗xd5 (16...♘xd5 17 exd5 ♗g4 18 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 19 ♖e1 ♗xf3 20 ♕xf3 is slightly more pleasant for White with his passed d-pawn, while Black has to be careful about his king's safety) 17 exd5 e4, as in T.Gharamian-Y.Solodovnichenko, French League 2008, and now 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 ♕xe4 would promise White an advantage, as 19...♗xb2 looks too risky, in view of, say, 20 ♘g5 g6 21 ♕h4 f6 22 ♘e6 ♕h7 23 ♕xc4.

14 ♗g5 ♗e6 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 ♘d5 ♗xd5 17 exd5

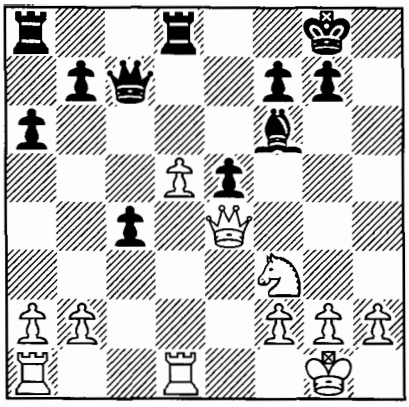


So after some simplification White has a small advantage thanks to his passed pawn and better minor piece. Black also has to watch out for mating ideas due to the absence of his h-pawn.

17...c4

17...♖fd8 was tried in the same year, but 18 ♕e4 (18 ♘d2 also looks interesting, trying to stymie Black's counterplay on the queenside) 18...♖d7 19 g4!? (exploiting Black's lack of an h-pawn) 19...g6 20 h4 ♖ad8 21 h5 gxh5 22 gxh5 ♕d6, as in A.Alavkin-V.Akhmadeev, St Petersburg 2003, and then 23 ♖d3 followed by ♘d2 looks to favour White.

18 ♕e4 ♖fd8



19 g4!?

We've already seen this idea in the previous note. Rublevsky successfully exploits Efimenko's compromised kingside.

19...g6 20 h4 ♕e7 21 ♖ac1!

White can win a pawn with 21 g5 ♗g7 22 ♕xc4 e4 23 ♖e1, but Black has reasonable compensation after 23...♕d7!.

21...b5 22 d6

This works out well, but gives Black additional options. I think White should have continued his kingside play with 22 h5!? gxh5 23 gxh5 ♔h8 24 ♔f1, with good chances on the kingside.

22...♕e6 23 ♖d5 ♖a7?!

Efimenko chooses the wrong square for his rook. 23...♖ac8! would have switched the initiative across to Black. The problem is that 24 ♖cd1? is met by 24...c3! 25 bxc3 ♖c4 when White would suddenly regret pushing his kingside pawns.

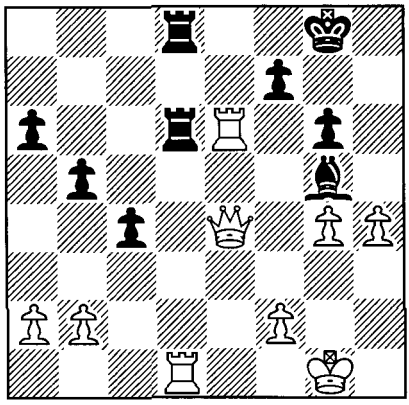
24 ♖cd1!

Now White is back in control.

24...♖ad7 25 ♘g5 ♗xg5

Efimenko decides his best try is sacrificing his queen. Instead 25...♕e8 26 ♕e3 is rather unpleasant for Black.

26 ♖xe5 ♖xd6 27 ♖xe6



27...♖xe6?!

But he chooses the wrong way of doing it. 27...♖xd1+ was stronger, although after 28 ♔g2 ♖1d4! (28...fxe6? 29 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 30 ♕xg5 is simply too dangerous as Black lacks a counter to h5-h6-h7) 29 ♖xg6+ ♔f8 30 ♕f5 ♖4d5 White should sacrifice his queen back, 31 ♕f3 ♖d3 32 ♖xg5! ♖xf3 33 ♔xf3 ♖d2 34 h5, reaching a commanding endgame.

28 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 29 ♕a8 ♖d6 30 g5!

Now Black has problems coordinating his few remaining pieces.

30...♔g7 31 ♕b8 ♖d5 32 ♕b7 ♖d6 33 ♔g2 ♖e6 34 f4 ♗e7 35 h5! gxh5 36 f5 1-0

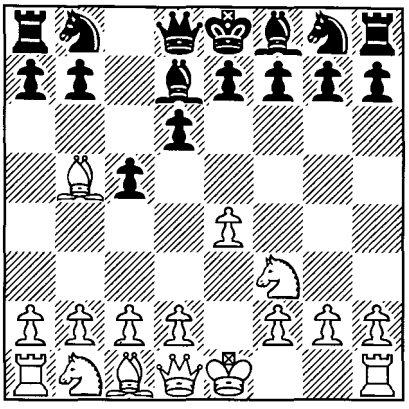
Conclusion

3...♘d7 is quite a common attempt to unbalance the position early on. Black takes great risks in the opening and hopes to exploit the advantage of the bishop-pair. However, I believe White's lead in development can be transformed into a comfortable middlegame position.

The Maroczy bind structures seen in this chapter will be examined in further detail in the next two chapters with the major difference being that Black will have two knights rather than two bishops. It isn't completely clear which is stronger, though, as the light-squared bishop is of limited use against the e4- and c4-pawns.

Chapter Two
Moscow Variation: 3...♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7

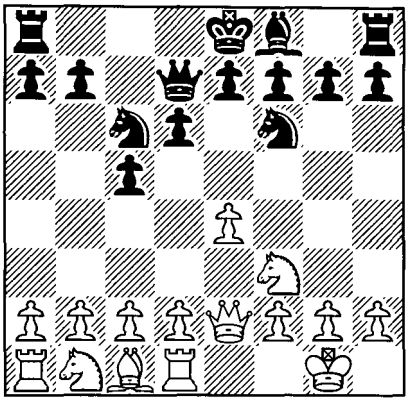
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7



This is Black's most solid option. He immediately exchanges the bishops and gains time in development. This is the line you are most likely to encounter and is advocated in many opening manuals.

4 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 5 0-0 ♘f6 6 ♕e2 ♘c6 7 ♖d1!?

This subtle approach is not even covered in Dorian Rogozenko's *Anti-Sicilians: A Guide for Black* nor the recent *Grandmaster Repertoire 6 - The Sicilian Defence* by Lubomir Ftacnik. I had a long think which line to adopt against 3...♗d7 and decided on this one. It is rather offbeat, gives good chances to confuse your opponent and is theoretically sound.



I remember that when I was learning the black side of the ♗b5+ Sicilians, I was taught to delay committing with ...e6 or ...g6 until White has shown his hand. That is because ...g6 is better against the Maroczy bind set-ups, but if White adopts a plan of c3 and d4 then Black should counter with ...e6 and ...d5, transposing to a French set-up. Here, however, if Black plays ...e6

then you can switch back to a Maroczy bind and put pressure on the d6-pawn.

Game 11 follows the mainline in which Black plays 7...e6 and allows us a Maroczy bind. Games 12 and 13 show the other principal line where Black goes for the kingside fianchetto, but allows White to take control of the centre. Then Game 14 examines the rather abstract 7...g5!? which must be taken seriously before the final three games of the chapter cover other set-ups Black might choose.

Repertoire Outline

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 5 0-0 ♘f6

Black pressures the e4-pawn, but this is by no means forced:

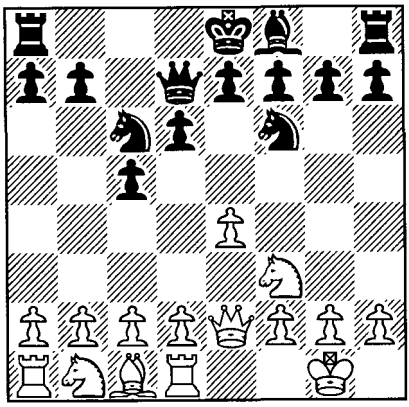
a) 5...♘c6 is actually the most common move, but is very likely to transpose after 6 ♕e2 ♘f6. The best independent alternative here is 6...g6, which has been tried by the Israeli Grandmaster Ilia Smirin. However, this doesn't prevent our plan of breaking with c2-c3 and d2-d4: 7 c3 ♗g7 8 ♖d1 e5 (again 8...♘f6 9 d4 should simply transpose) 9 ♘a3 ♘ge7 10 d4 is looked at in Game 17. Instead both 6...e6 and 6...e5 are likely to transpose to other lines.

b) 5...g6 was once tried by Judit Polgar and is reasonably common. After 6 c3 ♗g7 7 d4 cxd4 (again 7...♘f6 8 ♕e2 would transpose to the main line) 8 cxd4 either knight move will transpose to the mainline, while 8...e6 9 d5 looks promising for White.

c) 5...e6 is again seen fairly often and was once Vassily Ivanchuk's choice, but following 6 ♕e2 ♗e7 7 ♖d1 I don't see how Black makes progress without moving either knight which will transpose to the mainlines.

d) 5...e5 doesn't prevent our plan of taking over the centre and is seen in Game 17.

6 ♕e2 ♘c6 7 ♖d1



This is a key tabiya in the main line. Now:

a) 7...♖c8!? is a clever waiting move that has been tried by a few strong players (the highest-rated being the Russian Grandmaster Mikhail Kobalija) and is examined in the notes to Game 16.

b) 7...g5!? is the computer's first choice and thus should be taken seriously. We have a look at this in Game 14.

c) 7...♕g4 was tried by the high-rated Ukrainian Alexander Areshchenko, but it didn't work out well – see Game 15.

d) 7...e5 has been played by the highly-rated Russian Evgeny Najer, but condemns Black to a passive defence, as we'll see in Game 16.

e) 7...♘e5 has not been tried yet, but in general is a common try in ♗b5+ lines and is examined in the notes to Game 15.

f) 7...g6 was the choice of Alexander Grischuk and I imagine will be the choice of many of your opponents, but this falls into our plans and after 8 c3 ♗g7 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 we have successfully tricked Black into a fianchetto – see Games 12 and 13.

g) 7...e6 has been Black's most common reply to our interesting sideline. Then 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♗e7 10 c4 is seen in Game 11,

the first of the chapter, and again leaves us with a decent form of the Maroczy bind.

Game 11
A.Skripchenko-N.Bojkovic
Rethymnon 2003

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 5 0-0 ♘f6 6 ♕e2 ♘c6 7 ♖d1

Instead 7 c3 is White's main move when Black's strongest reply is 7...e6 8 d4 cxd4 9 cxd4 d5 10 e5 ♘e4 and I don't believe White has much here. Indeed I defended it successfully against Nigel Short, a game which went a long way towards my first GM norm.

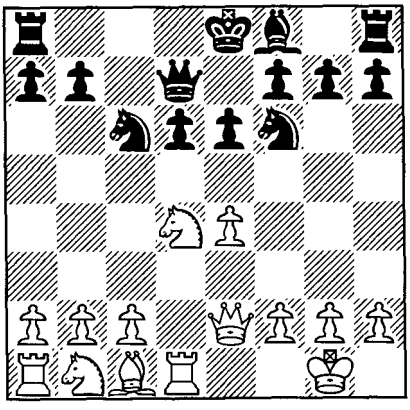
7...e6

So Black carries on with his same plan and this is by far his most common response.

8 d4!

The exclamation mark is more for surprise value than the move's respective strength over 8 c3, but I believe White has good chances here and, perhaps more importantly, I don't think your opponent will feel confident in the ensuing positions.

8...cxd4 9 ♘xd4



9...♗e7

The immediate 9...♘xd4 has also been tried, but after 10 ♖xd4 Black has to watch out for the e4-e5 break:

a) 10...♕c6 11 ♖c4! (11 c4 is no longer playable as Black has 11...e5!) 11...♕d7 12 ♘c3.

a1) 12...♗e7 13 ♘b5! ♗d8 14 ♖d4! and White picked up the important d6-pawn, A.Maier-P.Nabavi, Nuremberg 2007.

a2) 12...♖c8 is better, although White's still on top: 13 ♖xc8+ ♕xc8 14 ♗f4 ♕c6 15 ♖d1 ♗e7 16 ♘b5 e5 17 ♘xa7 ♕a4 18 ♗e3 0-0 19 f3 ♖a8 20 ♘b5 ♕xa2 was seen in U.Andersson-E.El Gindy, Las Vegas 1999, and now 21 b3 would have left White with a great position.

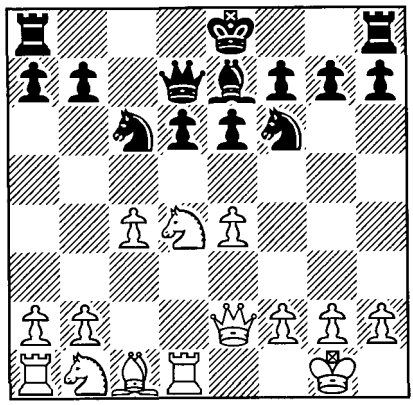
b) 10...e5 11 ♖d3 h6 12 ♘c3 ♗e7 13 ♘d5 ♘xd5 14 ♖xd5 0-0 15 c4 ♕e6 16 b3 f5 17 exf5 ♖xf5 18 ♗e3 a6 19 ♖ad1 and White was in complete control in V.Yandemirov-V.Akhmadeev, Toljatti 2007.

I essayed this variation recently. My opponent, a talented Irish junior and former pupil, panicked and tried breaking out immediately with 9...d5?! allowing 10 exd5! ♘xd5 (10...♘xd4 11 ♖xd4 ♗d6 is a lesser evil, although White is simply a pawn up) 11 c4 when he was losing material by force: 11...♘f6 (during the game I thought his only try was 11...♘f4, but following 12 ♗xf4 ♘xd4 13 ♕e4 0-0-0 – 13...♖d8 14 ♘c3 f6 15 ♖xd4! ♕xd4 16 ♕xe6+ ♗e7 17 ♘d5 ♖xd5 18 cxd5 ♕xf4 19 ♖e1 ♕c7 20 d6 also loses – 14 ♘c3 f6 15 ♘b5 Black has grave problems on the d-file) 12 ♘b5 ♕c8 13 ♗f4 and Black was already dropping the exchange in G.Jones-O.Benson, Dun Laoghaire 2010.

10 c4

So we have our typical Maroczy bind position, one we have already seen in the first chapter. The difference here is that Black has a knight rather than the light-squared bishop. Black's position is solid, but it's hard

for him to come up with an active plan and I know I've felt rather uncomfortable on the black side of this structure.



As White we want to put pressure on d6 and, most importantly, prevent Black's two liberating thrusts, ...d6-d5 and ...b7-b5, which means being very patient. The system is about strangling Black and not allowing him a thread of counterplay. As you'll see in the illustrative games, White wishes to attack on the kingside, but first he should stop even the idea of any play for Black.

10...♘xd4

Black immediately exchanges in the centre although this isn't forced.

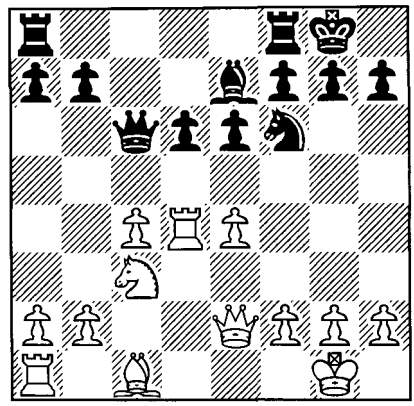
After 10...0-0 11 ♘c3 practice has seen:

a) 11...♖fc8 12 b3 (12 ♘f3!? immediately looks interesting) 12...a6 13 ♗b2 ♕c7 14 ♖ac1 ♕a5 15 ♘f3 h6 16 h3 ♖ab8 17 a3! ♕h5 (to be able to meet 17...b5 with 18 b4!) 18 b4 ♖d8 19 ♖d2 ♖bc8 20 ♖cd1 ♘e8 was V.Zvjaginsev-E.Najer, Moscow 2004, and here 21 ♕e3 would have continued to pressure Black.

b) The 11...♖ac8 12 b3 ♘xd4 13 ♖xd4 ♕c6 of L.Fressinet-S.Karjakin, Internet (blitz) 2004, allowed White to put immediate pressure on d6 with 14 ♗a3!.

c) 11...a6 12 b3 ♕c7 13 ♗b2 ♖fd8 14 ♖ac1 ♕a5 and unfortunately there are no more moves for L.Fressinet-L.Van Wely, Ajaccio (blitz) 2007, but perhaps White could proceed with 15 ♘xc6!?, exploiting Black's reluctance to exchange knights himself. The idea is 15...bxc6 16 ♘a4 ♕g5 (16...e5 17 ♗c3 ♕c7 18 c5! is rather unpleasant for Black as his structure becomes wrecked) 17 ♖c3! with attractive kingside ambitions.

11 ♖xd4 ♕c6 12 ♘c3 0-0



13 b3

This move makes the most sense to me. The bishop shores up the queenside on b2 whilst also looking down the long diagonal at Black's king. It will be harder to open up the centre with the bishop on b2 as it is likely that Black will have an accident on g7.

Having said that, the strong Ukrainian GM Vladimir Baklan opted for 13 ♗g5 and started pressing following 13...♕c5 14 ♗e3 ♖ac8 15 ♖c1 a6 16 b3 ♖fd8 17 ♖dd1 ♕a5 18 ♗d2 ♕e5 19 f4 ♕c5+ 20 ♔h1 ♕c6 21 ♖e1 ♘d7 22 ♘d5! (a trick you should always be on the lookout for) 22...♗f8 23 ♘b4 ♕b6 24 ♘d3 (a strong manoeuvring sequence) 24...♘c5 25 f5!? ♖e8 26 f6! and White's space advantage was starting to turn into something more concrete in V.Baklan-R.Polzin, Austrian League 2006.

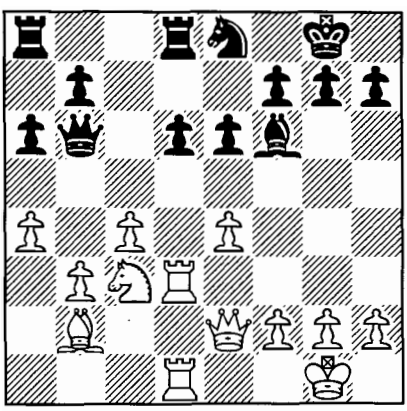
13...a6

13...♖fd8 was tried against Skripchenko in a more recent game, which continued 14 ♗b2 ♘e8 15 ♖ad1 ♗f6 16 ♖4d3 a6. Now:

a) A strong Chinese Grandmaster didn't listen to my words of advice about preventing Black's ...b7-b5. He proceeded with 17 ♖h3?!, but 17...b5! 18 cxb5 axb5 19 a3 h6 20 ♕g4 ♖dc8 21 ♖dd3 ♔f8 left Black on top as White's kingside play was going nowhere in Yu Shaoteng-Wang Zili, Suzhou 2006.

b) 17 ♘a4!? is an interesting tactical try: 17...b5 (or 17...♗xb2 18 ♘xb2 b5 19 a4! and the knight is very useful on b2) 18 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 19 e5! ♘e8 20 ♘b2 bxc4 21 ♘xc4 d5 22 ♘a5 ♕b6 23 b4! and White still has the more comfortable position.

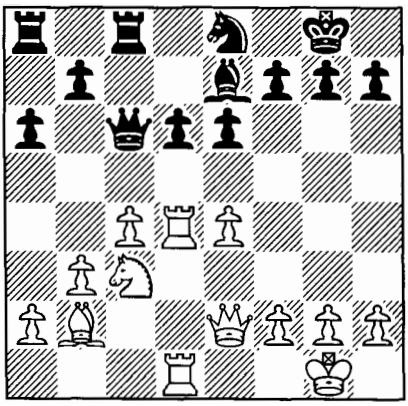
c) 17 a4 was Skripchenko's choice. After 17...♕b6 White has a further choice:



c1) 18 ♕c2 ♕c6 was A.Skripchenko-S.Collas, French League 2007, and here I think 19 f3 was best, since 19...♕c5+ 20 ♔h1 b5 21 axb5 ♗xc3 22 ♕xc3 axb5 23 e5 retains the advantage.

c2) I was drawn to the idea of 18 ♗a1!? as 18...♕xb3?! 19 ♘d5 ♕xa4 20 ♘b6 ♕c6 21 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 22 ♘xa8 wins material. 18...♖ac8 is better when it's still possible to ignore the b3-pawn with 19 ♔h1!? ♕xb3 20 ♘d5 ♕xc4 21 ♘b6 ♕c7 (21...♕c2 22 ♖3d2 doesn't change much) 22 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 23 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 24 ♖xd6 ♘xe4! 25 ♖6d4 (25 ♕xe4? ♕xd6! exploits White's back-rank problems) 25...♘c5 and White still has a small advantage with his control of the d-file. On an open board a rook is very useful and do note that 25...♘c3 26 ♖c4! would turn the tables on the back-rank theme.

14 ♗b2 ♖fc8 15 ♖ad1 ♘e8



16 a4!

I can't stress enough how important it is not to allow Black to break with ...b7-b5.

16...♗f6 17 ♖4d3 h6 18 ♔h1 ♕b6 19 ♕c2

Again the pawn doesn't need to be defended automatically. Instead 19 ♗a1!? looks interesting as after 19...♕xb3 20 ♘d5 ♕xa4 21 ♘xf6+ (21 ♘b6 ♕c6 22 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 23 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 is about level) 21...gxf6 (21...♘xf6 22 ♗xf6 gxf6 23 ♕d2! leaves White with a very powerful initiative) 22 ♕h5 White's attack looks very promising, although perhaps Black can survive after 22...♔f8 23 ♕xh6+ ♔e7.

19...♕c6 20 f3?!

20 ♕d2 was better, getting the queen off the X-ray on the c-file. Skripchenko was evidently worried about 20...♕b6, but now 21 ♗a1! indirectly defends the pawn as after 21...♕xb3?! 22 ♘d5! ♕xc4? (22...♕xd1+ should be tried, although White is of course

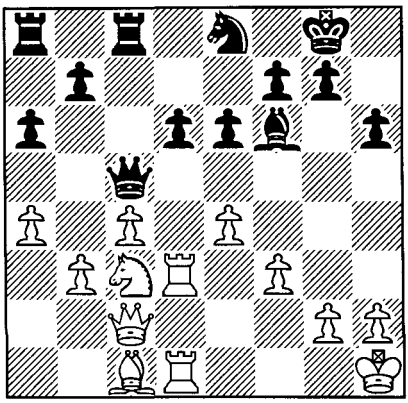
better) 23 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 24 ♗xf6 gxf6 25 ♕xh6 White wins.

20...♕c5

Here the tactics worked out for Black to be able to play 20...b5! which would have equalized immediately following 21 axb5 axb5 22 cxb5 (22 ♘xb5? ♕xb5 is the whole problem) 22...♕c5 and with the vulnerable b-pawns, White even has to play accurately to keep equality.

21 ♗c1?!

The queen needs to remove itself from the c-file: 21 ♕d2!.



21...♗g5

21...b5! should again have been played.

22 f4 ♗e7 23 ♗e3 ♕h5 24 ♗d4

Back on track!

24...♕a5

24...b5 could still be attempted, but in the meantime White has generated the start of a kingside attack. She could continue with 25 ♖h3 ♕g4 26 ♖g3 ♕xf4 27 ♕e2 ♕h4 28 cxb5 axb5 29 ♖h3 ♕g5 30 ♘xb5 and Black has to guard against White's kingside attack, while remembering that she can't exchange too much or White's connected passers on the queenside will decide.

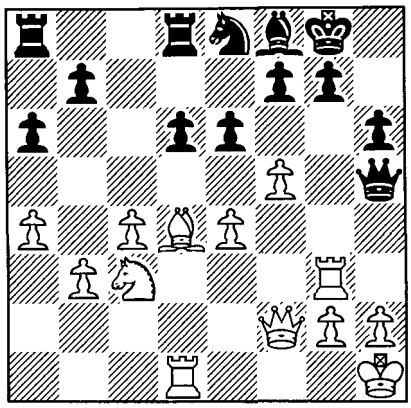
25 ♕b2

Time to breathe a lot easier with the queen off the c-file!

25...♗f8 26 ♖g3

What's more, Black now has problems defending g7 as Skripchenko's pieces are starting to swarm threateningly.

26...♖d8 27 ♕f2 ♕h5 28 ♖h3 ♕g4 29 ♖g3 ♕h5 30 f5!



Breaking through.

30...exf5?!

I don't like this move as now White has possession of the d5-square for her knight which will prove deadly. However, it was hard to offer palatable alternatives: for example, 30...♖d7 31 ♖f1 (threatening 32 fxe6 as f8 is undefended) 31...♘c7 32 ♗xg7 (32 ♕d2!? might be even stronger) 32...♗xg7 33 f6 with an overwhelming position.

31 exf5 b5 32 ♖h3 ♕g4 33 ♖dd3 ♕g5 34 ♖hg3 ♕h5 35 ♘d5

35 ♗e3! was the most accurate as Black's queen has suddenly run out of squares: 35...bxc4 36 bxc4 f6 37 ♖g6 and the queen is trapped.

35...bxc4 36 bxc4 ♖ab8 37 h3 ♔h7 38 ♖g4

38 ♖g6! would have been a pretty way to finish off Bojkovic. Again Black's queen has run out of squares and 38...fxg6 39 g4 ♕g5 40 ♗e3 doesn't give Black much opportunity to play on.

38...f6?!

Trying to get a square for the queen, but this fails.

39 ♖g6!

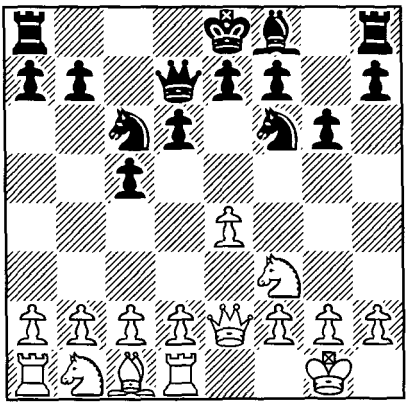
That queen isn't going anywhere.

39...♖b1+ 40 ♔h2 ♖d1 41 g4! ♖xd3 42 gxh5 ♖c8 43 ♖g3 1-0

Game 12
V.Tkachiev-L.Fressinet
Bordeaux (rapid) 2000

Interestingly after this game Fressinet started adopting this system as White!

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 5 0-0 ♘f6 6 ♕e2 ♘c6 7 ♖d1 g6



This is Black's second most common response after 7...e6. The fianchetto is considered the best set-up against the Maroczy bind so here I advocate...

8 c3!

...as following...

8...♗g7 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4

...the bishop is biting on granite on d4. It's too late for Black to switch back to a French set-up.

10...d5

10..0-0 will be looked at in the next game.

11 e5 ♘e4 12 ♘e1

We threaten to trap the knight and thus force a weakness from Black. I like White's position in the game, but if you wish to deviate then you might follow Skripchenko who recently tried 12 ♘c3!? ♘xc3 13 bxc3. This position reminds me of the structure seen in Jones-Mah seen in Chapter Ten and after 13...0-0 14 h4! ♖fc8 15 h5 gxh5 16 ♘h2 ♕f5 17 ♖d3 ♘d8 18 ♖f3 ♕e4 19 ♖e3 ♕f5 20 ♕b5! ♘e6 21 ♕xd5 White had definitely taken the upper hand in A.Skripchenko-A.Breier, German League 2009.

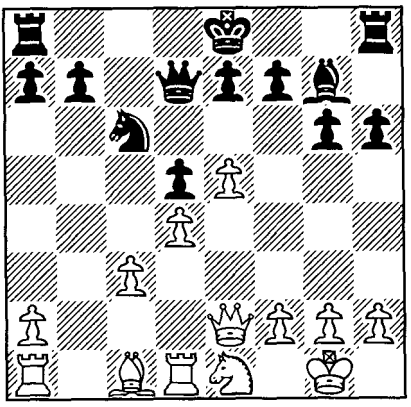
12...h6

12...f6 is tried in the main line with ...e6 and ...♗e7, rather than ...g6 and ...♗g7, but here it doesn't look so convincing. M.Socko-M.Maciejewski, Polanica Zdroj 2007, continued 13 f3 ♘g5 14 ♗xg5 fxg5 15 ♕e3 h6 16 ♘d3 b6 17 ♘c3 0-0 18 ♖ac1 ♖ac8 19 ♘f2 ♘a5 20 b3 e6 21 ♕d3 ♔h7 22 ♘b5 and it was clear that the doubled g-pawns were just weaknesses.

13 ♘c3

So White now offers the knight exchange once Black has weakened his kingside with ...h6. The typical ...f7-f6 thrust to free the g7-bishop is far more difficult to achieve once Black has been forced to play ...h6, as g6 will become too vulnerable.

13...♘xc3 14 bxc3

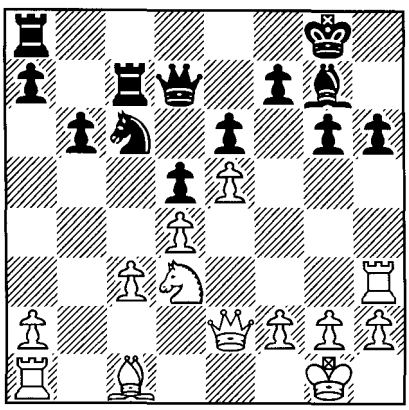


14...0-0

Perhaps this natural move is the cause of all Black's future problems. Fressinet later took the white side against Grischuk, one of the world's elite. The Russian defended with 14...♖c8, postponing castling, although following 15 ♘d3 ♘d8 16 ♗d2 0-0 17 h4!? h5 in L.Fressinet-A.Grischuk, Calatrava (rapid) 2007, had the Frenchman switched to playing on the queenside with 18 a4 ♘e6 19 a5 ♖c4 20 ♖db1 he would have had a pleasant initiative.

15 ♘d3 b6 16 ♘f4 ♖ac8?!

Allowing e5-e6 puts Black under intense pressure. Initially when I looked at the game I thought Black could equalize comfortably with 16...e6. However, after having a deeper look, I can appreciate that White's kingside attack should definitely not be underestimated: for instance, 17 ♖d3 ♖fc8 18 ♖h3 ♖c7 19 ♘d3 and then:

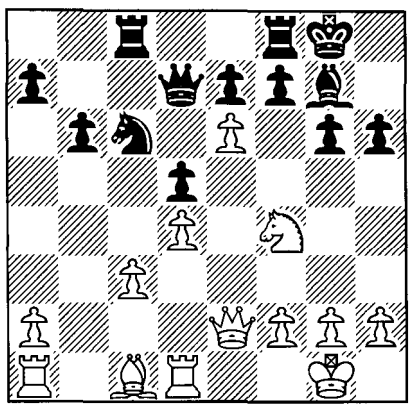


a) 19...♘e7 20 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 21 ♖xh6 ♖xc3 22 ♖h3! and White's threat of ♕d2-h6 cannot be parried forever: 22...♕c7 23 ♕d2 ♘f5 24 g4! ♖c2 25 ♕f4 ♕c3 26 gxf5! ♕xa1+ 27 ♔g2 ♕d1 28 fxg6 fxg6 29 ♕f6 ♕g4+ 30 ♖g3 ♕e4+ 31 ♔f1 ♕h1+ 32 ♖g1 and Black runs out of checks. Of course the line isn't forced, but it gives some indication of White's aggressive possibilities.

b) 19...h5 is necessary, although White continues his dangerous attack with 20 g4! ♘e7 21 gxh5 ♖xc3 22 hxg6 ♘xg6 (22...fxg6 is forced, although 23 ♕g4 ♖f8 24 a4!? leaves White with a dangerous initiative) 23 ♗b2 ♖c4 24 ♕h5 ♖a4 (otherwise 25 ♗a3 is too big a threat) 25 ♕h7+ ♔f8 26 ♖f3! ♘e7 27 ♘f4! ♘f5 28 ♘h5 and White's attack crashes through.

Instead if Black tries defending e6 with 16...♘d8 then White can again switch his operations to the queenside with 17 a4!, intending 17...♘e6 18 ♘xe6 (18 ♕b5!? ♕xb5 19 axb5 ♘c7 20 ♖b1 would cause Black to suffer in the ending) 18...♕xe6 19 a5 when White must be better with his minority attack style pressure on the queenside, while Black's g7-bishop is completely blocked out of the game.

17 e6!



17...♕d6 18 ♕g4 g5

18...♔h7 19 exf7 ♕f6 20 ♗e3 ♕xf7 21 ♘e6 is hardly any better as White's knight on e6 completely dominates.

19 exf7+ ♔xf7 20 ♕f5+

White decides to pick up a pawn. It was also possible to keep the attack going with 20 ♘h5!? ♗h8 21 f4! when I think Black's chances of surviving are slight.

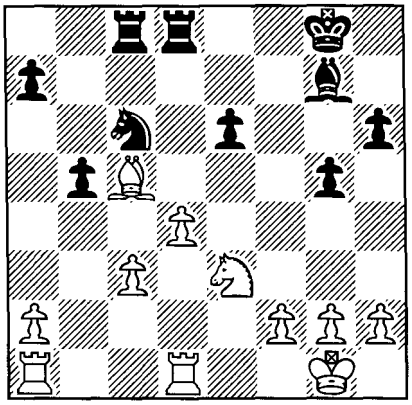
20...♔g8

20...♕f6 21 ♕xd5+ e6 22 ♕d7+ ♕e7 23 ♕xe7+ ♘xe7 24 ♘e2 also drops a pawn for insufficient play.

21 ♕xd5+ ♕xd5 22 ♘xd5 e6?!

22...♖fd8 23 ♘e3 e5 was the best try to keep White's edge within manageable bounds: for example, 24 d5 ♘a5 25 ♖b1!? (25 ♗b2 ♘c4 26 ♘xc4 ♖xc4 gives Black good chances to hold with his active rooks) 25...♖xc3 26 ♗b2 ♖cc8 27 ♖bc1 and Black has regained his pawn, but will still have to suffer due to that passed d-pawn, while his own kingside pawns are rather vulnerable.

23 ♘e3 b5 24 ♗a3 ♖fd8 25 ♗c5!



A good square for the bishop, which keeps White's c- and d-pawns secure. Black now has nothing to show for the pawn.

25...b4!?

This doesn't really help but Black is trying desperately to activate his pieces.

26 cxb4 ♘xd4 27 ♔f1 a6 28 ♖ac1 ♖b8 29 ♖d3 ♘b5 30 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 31 ♖d1 ♖c8 32 ♘c4 ♘c3 33 ♘b6! ♖c7

33...♖xc5? of course fails to 34 ♖d8+.

34 ♖d8+ ♔h7 35 a4

There's not much Black can do against the plan of creating a kingside passed pawn.

35...♘e4 36 ♖d7!

Of course the pawns are harder to stop without rooks on the board.

36...♖xd7 37 ♘xd7 ♔g6 38 ♗e3

Of course the end of a rapid game is going to have some errors, but it's clear that Black cannot afford to underestimate our opening weapon.

Instead 38 a5! would have been the most accurate finish, threatening both ♘d7-b8 and b4-b5.

38...♘c3 39 a5 ♘d5 40 ♗d2

After 40 b5! Black would have to give his knight to stop the a-pawn.

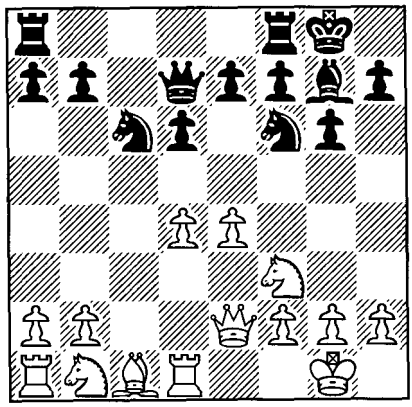
40...♔f7 41 ♘b8 ♘c7 42 ♗e3 ♔e7 43 ♗b6 ♔d6 44 ♗xc7+ ♔xc7 45 ♘xa6+ ♔c6 46 ♔e2 ♗d4 47 f3 ♔b5 48 ♘c7+ ♔xb4 49 ♘xe6 ♗g1 50 a6 ♔a5 51 h3

51 h4! gxh4 52 f4 ♔xa6 53 f5 ♗h2 54 f6 ♗d6 55 f7 is easily winning.

51...♔xa6 52 ♔d3 ♔b6 53 ♔e4 ♔c6 54 ♔f5 ♔d6 55 ♘g7 ♔e7 56 ♔g6 ♗e3 57 ♘f5+ ♔e6 58 ♘xh6 ♔e7 59 ♘f7 ♔f8 60 ♘xg5 ♔g8 61 h4 ♗f2 62 h5 ♗d4 63 h6 1-0

Game 13
V.Yandemirov-I.Gerasimov
Kazan 2009

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 5 0-0 ♘f6 6 ♕e2 ♘c6 7 ♖d1 g6 8 c3 ♗g7 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 0-0



11 d5

Immediately claiming the centre and not giving Black another chance to play ...d6-d5 himself.

11...♘b4

Practice has also seen:

a) A young Karjakin tried 11...♘a5, although it gets Black no closer to equality:

a1) 12 b4 is tempting, but 12...♕a4! (12...♘xe4 13 ♗b2! ♗xb2 14 ♕xb2 ♘c4 15 ♕e2 picks up a piece) 13 e5 ♘d7 14 bxa5 ♘xe5 15 ♘d4 ♘f3+ 16 ♘xf3 ♗xa1 is rather messy.

a2) 12 ♗d2! b6 (12...♕a4 13 ♘c3 ♕c4 14 ♖ac1 ♖ac8 15 ♕e1! leaves White with a pleasant edge as Black has problems with his dim knight on a5) 13 ♗xa5 (13 ♘d4!?) 13...bxa5 14 ♘c3 ♘g4 15 ♘d4 ♖fc8 16 ♖ac1 a4 17 a3 a6 18 h3 ♘e5 19 f4 ♕a7 was L.Fressinet-S.Karjakin, Internet (blitz) 2004, and here 20 ♕f2 would have picked up material starting with the a4-pawn.

b) 11...♘e5 has also been tried, but Black will always be worse with his blockaded bishop on g7: 12 ♘xe5 dxe5 13 ♘c3 ♖fd8 14 ♗g5 h6 (G.Kuba-G.Schauer, Vienna 1996) 15 ♗e3 when White has a comfortable edge and can begin proceedings on the queenside.

12 ♘c3 e5

Attempting to transpose into a type of King's Indian position. Another game of Kuba's continued 12...a5 13 ♗e3 ♘g4 14 ♗d4 ♘e5 15 ♘xe5 (15 ♗xe5!? is also possible) 15...dxe5 16 ♗e3 f5 17 f3 ♖f6 18 ♖ac1 ♗f8 19 a3 ♘a6 20 ♕b5 and Black had significant problems to overcome in G.Kuba-G.Hitzgerova, Vienna 1996.

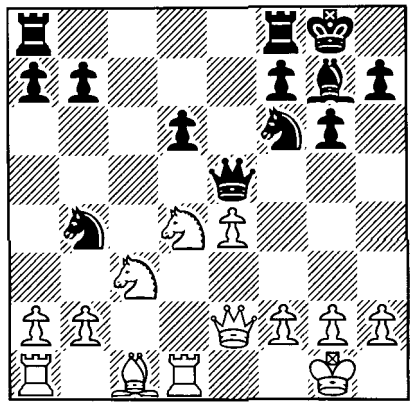
13 dxe6!

Yandemirov correctly declines the offer to play a King's Indian position. The d6-pawn is now a chronic weakness.

13...♕xe6?!

And after this the d5-square is also a problem. 13...fxe6 was stronger, although White's central pressure still promises him an advantage: 14 ♗e3 ♕e7 15 ♖d2 ♘c6 16 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 17 ♗f4 and the pressure on the d-file is starting to tell.

14 ♘d4 ♕e5



15 ♕b5

15 ♕f3! was very strong, intending to put further pressure on d6 when I don't believe the pawn can be retained: for instance, 15...♖fd8 16 ♗f4 ♕h5 17 a3 ♕xf3 (17...♘a6 18 ♘db5 transposes) 18 gxf3 ♘a6 19 ♘db5 and the d6-pawn drops.

15...♘a6

Gerasimov misses his chance to become active: 15...♘g4! 16 ♘f3 (16 ♕xb4 ♕xh2+ 17 ♔f1 ♖ae8! gives Black a dangerous initiative) 16...♕c5 17 ♕e2 and White is still better thanks to the weak d6-pawn, although Black is starting activate his forces.

16 ♕xe5!?

An interesting decision by Yandemirov. On the one hand the bishop on g7 is now blocked in, but the pawn is safer on e5 than d6.

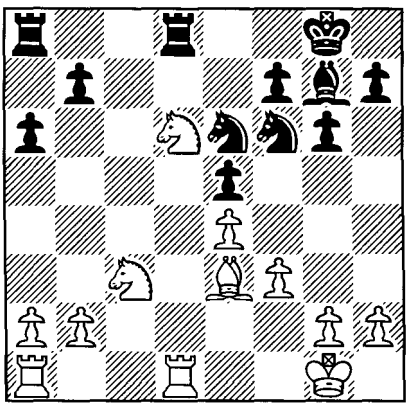
16...dxe5 17 ♘db5

White still holds the trumps in the position with his pressure along the d-file and the queenside. Moreover, his knights will be

very useful on both d6 and d5.

17...♘c5 18 f3 ♘e6 19 ♗e3 a6 20 ♘d6 ♖fd8

The immediate 20...b5 looked strongest, although White retains the advantage. A sample line might continue 21 a4 (21 ♖ac1!? also favours White) 21...♘d4! 22 ♗xd4 exd4 23 ♘e2 ♖fd8 24 ♘b7 ♖db8 25 ♘c5 bxa4 26 ♘xd4 ♖xb2 and Black is close to equality, but will still have to suffer.



21 ♘c4!

21 ♘xb7 would have allowed Black some respite after 21...♖db8 (21...♖xd1+?! 22 ♘xd1! defends the b2-pawn and leaves White a pawn up) 22 ♘a5 ♖xb2 23 ♘c6 ♘f4 24 ♖d2 ♖xd2 25 ♗xd2 and White is still better, although Black's position has improved.

21...b5 22 ♘b6 ♖ab8 23 ♘bd5

So the White knight's journey is complete. Black has long-term problems on the queenside, especially with his a6-pawn, whilst he still has no play of his own.

23...♘xd5 24 ♘xd5 ♔f8 25 ♖ac1

A sensible developing move, although 25 ♘b4!, hitting the sensitive a6-pawn, would have left Black with severe problems after 25...♖xd1+ 26 ♖xd1 ♖a8 27 ♖d6 a5 28 ♘d5.

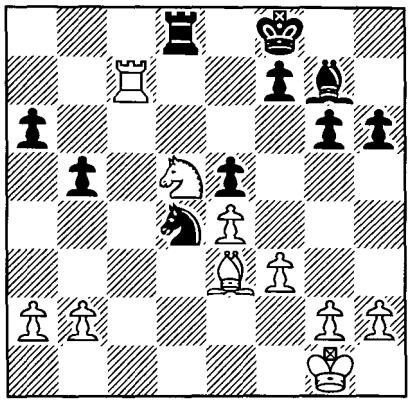
25...♖dc8

25...♖bc8 would make more sense.

26 ♘b6 ♖xc1 27 ♖xc1 ♖d8 28 ♘d5 ♘d4

28...♘f4 should have been tried, although after 29 ♗xf4 exf4 30 b3 White's knight dominates the board.

29 ♖c7 h6



30 ♗d2?!

The end of the game is littered with inaccuracies, although White never gives up his clear advantage and is ultimately successful. I presume that both players were under time constraints. Instead 30 ♖a7! would have won the a6-pawn and thus the game as 30...♖d6?? is of course not possible due to 31 ♖a8+.

30...♖a8

30...♘e2+ 31 ♔f2 ♘f4 was still necessary.

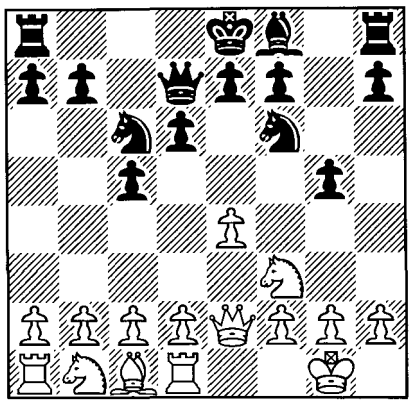
31 ♗a5 ♘e6 32 ♖d7 ♔g8 33 ♔f1 ♗f8 34 ♗c3 ♘d4 35 ♗xd4 exd4 36 ♔e2 ♖c8 37 ♖c7 ♖d8 38 ♖c6 a5 39 ♔d3 ♗d6 40 h3 ♗e5 41 ♖c5 1-0

Game 14
D.Breder-R.Bates
Hastings 2009/10

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 5 0-0 ♘f6 6 ♕e2 ♘c6 7 ♖d1 g5!?

This is actually my computer's top sug-

gestion and thus has to be taken seriously. Black aims for control of d4, but this is of course very risky as Black has now advanced pawns on both sides of the board and thus will find it hard to find a safe location for his king.



8 c3

The pawn is poisoned: 8 ♘xg5? ♘d4 9 ♕f1 (or 9 ♕c4 ♕g4! and there's no way to defend both d1 and g5) 9...h6 10 ♘h3 (10 ♘xf7 is a lesser evil, although there's not really any compensation for the piece after 10...♔xf7) 10...♘xc2 is hopeless.

8...g4 9 ♘h4

9 ♘e1 has been played more often, but the knight gets in the way here and Black started to take the upper hand after 9...♕e6 10 d3 d5 11 ♗g5 0-0-0 12 ♘d2 ♖g8 13 ♗xf6 exf6! in D.Collutiis-D.Vocaturo, Palau 2009.

9...♕e6 10 d3 c4

10...0-0-0 was tried the only other time this position was reached:

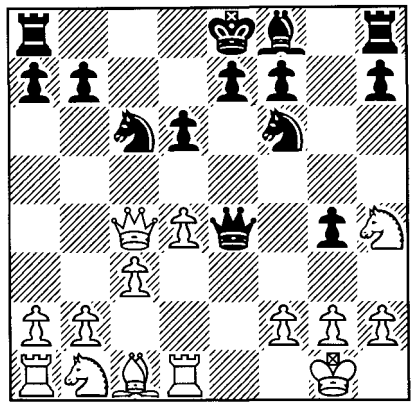
a) 11 ♗e3 was played in Chan,W-Le,Q Ho Chi Minh City 2009, but it didn't stop 11...d5!.

b) I prefer 11 ♗f4!?:

b1) 11...c4 12 ♘d2 cxd3 13 ♕xd3 d5 14 exd5 ♘xd5 15 ♗g3 ♗h6 16 ♕c2 is complicated, but the bishop on g3 is useful both as an aggressor and a defender of White's king. Black could try 16...♘e3!? here, but 17 fxe3 ♕xe3+ 18 ♔h1 ♖xd2 19 ♖xd2 ♕xd2 20 ♕f5+ looks more comfortable for White.

b2) 11...d5 12 ♘d2 ♘h5 13 ♗g3 and the bishop again does a good job, both defending White's king and looking towards Black's. Perhaps Black should take the opportunity to play 13...♘xg3 14 hxg3 ♔b8, but White's attack looks the more promising after 15 ♘b3 b6 16 d4!.

11 d4! ♕xe4 12 ♕xc4



An extremely complex position has arisen. In Black's favour he has the two central pawns and White's knight on h4 is misplaced. However, on the other hand, Black's king is a major issue. Castling kingside is really out of the question with his g-pawn so far advanced and so he will have to either castle queenside or keep the king in the centre; neither of which looks very appetizing. Black also has to be careful of his queen which will get shunted about as White develops.

12...♖g8 13 ♘a3

I'm not convinced by this move. I think the knight belonged on d2 where it could develop with tempi: 13 ♘d2!? ♕c2 14 ♖e1 d5 15 ♕b3 ♕xb3 16 axb3 0-0-0 17 b4 a6 18 ♘b3 looks a little more comfortable for White.

Perhaps, though, developing with 13 ♗e3 was strongest. Here we see Black starting to have problems with his queen, while 13...♘d5 can be met with 14 ♘d2 ♘xe3 15 ♕e2 ♕e6 16 fxe3 ♗h6 17 e4 when Black's main trumps of central control and White's misplaced knight have disappeared.

13...e6

13...0-0-0! looks like Black's best when the position can best be summed up as dynamic equality. Both sides are going to try quick attacks on the respective kings. I looked at a few different ideas for White, but found nothing that promised him an advantage, and thus I think 13 ♗e3 should be tried. Here:

a) 14 d5 ♕xc4 15 ♘xc4 ♘e5 is totally fine for Black.

b) 14 ♕xf7? is of course not possible, as 14...d5 traps the queen.

c) 14 b4 ♔b8 15 b5 ♘a5 16 ♕a4 b6 17 c4 ♖c8 18 ♗d2 ♘b7 and Black's position is holding up.

d) 14 ♕f1!? is an interesting try, with the idea to expel the black queen. The position is extremely unclear after 14...♔b8 15 ♖e1 ♕d5 16 ♘c2 ♖c8.

14 ♗d2 ♗e7 15 g3 ♕d5 16 ♕e2 ♔d7?!

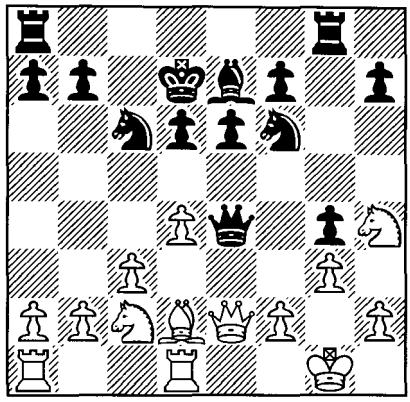
The English IM misevaluates where his king stands best. 16...0-0-0 was stronger when the position would still be roughly equal, but White's position is probably easier to play as his plan is simple: a pawn storm towards Black's king starting with 17 b4!.

17 ♘c2

Instead 17 c4!? is a dangerous pawn sacrifice: 17...♘xd4 18 ♕f1 ♕h5 19 ♕d3 ♘c6 20 ♘b5 with at least a pawn's worth of compensation down the d-file.

Meanwhile 17 ♗f4 looks like the calmest approach when following 17...♘h5 18 ♘g2 ♖ad8 19 ♕c2 ♔c8 20 b4 White's aggression on the queenside looks scarier than Black's respective play on the kingside.

17...♕e4



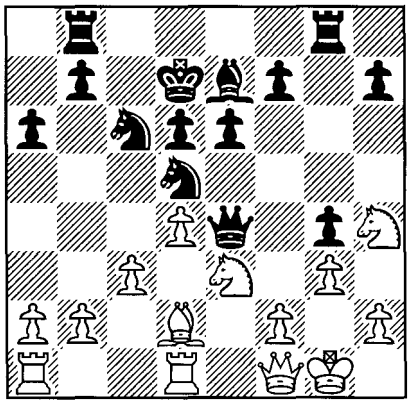
18 ♕b5!

Of course with the safer king White isn't interesting in the queen swap which would leave Black on top.

18...♖ab8

18...♘e8!? is an interesting defensive manoeuvre, although 19 ♕xb7+ ♘c7 20 ♘b4 ♖ab8 21 ♕xc6+ ♕xc6 22 ♘xc6 ♔xc6 23 ♖ab1 ♗xh4 24 gxh4 should favour White.

19 ♘e3 a6 20 ♕f1 ♘d5



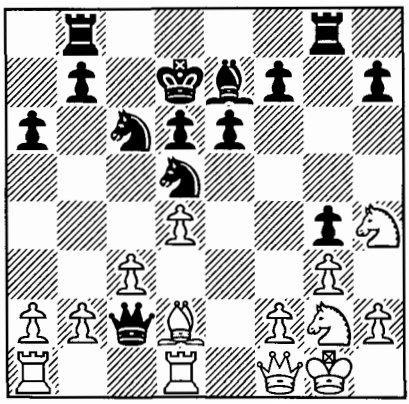
21 ♘eg2!?

An odd-looking move. Breder attempts to show that Black doesn't have enough

central squares for his pieces. Bates' pieces may look strong now, but watch over the next few moves as they are forced backwards. 21 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 22 ♘g2 might have seemed more logical, but 22...♕b5! seems to equalize.

21...♕c2?!

Black just loses further tempi with the queen here. Perhaps 21...b5!? should have been tried to stop White's pawn storm, but Bates was understandably reluctant to advance pawns on both flanks.

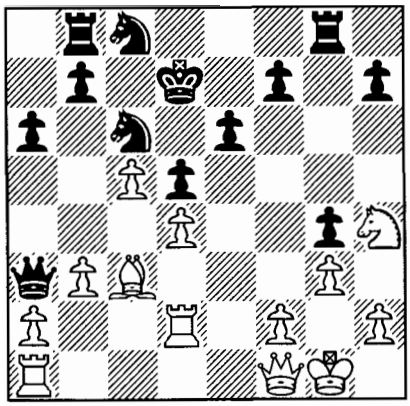


22 c4! ♘b6 23 ♗c3 ♗xh4

I don't like this move. Black gets rid of White's superfluous knight in return for his bishop which was holding the dark squares. Unfortunately he doesn't seem to have much choice: 23...♗g5 would at least keep the bishop on the board, but 24 d5 exd5 25 cxd5 ♘e7 26 ♖d4 h5 27 ♖ad1 looks extremely unpleasant.

The immediate 23...d5?! fails to 24 ♘e3 ♕e4 25 ♖e1! when again we see the problems with having your queen deep in enemy territory: 25...♗xh4 is forced to keep the queen alive, but after 26 ♘xd5 ♕f5 27 ♘xb6+ ♔c7 28 d5! White's attack crashes through.

24 ♘xh4 d5 25 c5 ♘c8 26 ♖d2 ♕a4 27 b3 ♕a3



What a transformation has taken place over the past six moves. Black's pieces have been pushed to the sides of the board and White has taken complete control.

28 f3

28 ♘g2! with the idea of ♘e3-c2, winning the trapped queen, was very strong. Black should try 28...b5, but 29 ♘e3 (29 f3!? also increases in strength now) 29...b4 30 ♘c2 ♕a5 31 ♘xb4! ♘xb4 32 a3 picks up material and should be decisive.

28...♘8e7

28...b6 was the only try, attempting to get that black queen out of quarantine, although 29 fxg4 ♔e8 30 ♖f2 is great for White.

29 fxg4 ♖xg4 30 ♕xf7

So White picks up a pawn and still holds all the trumps in the position. Black holds on valiantly, but the result should no longer be in doubt.

30...♖e4 31 ♘g2?!

This is careless. 31 ♘f3! was a more active square, looking at jumping into g5 while 31...h6 can be met by 32 ♘e1!, a plan we have already seen.

31...e5 32 ♕xh7

32 ♖c2! exd4 33 ♗b2 ♕a5 34 ♘f4 would have kept Black's counterplay under control. Now Black gets back into the game.

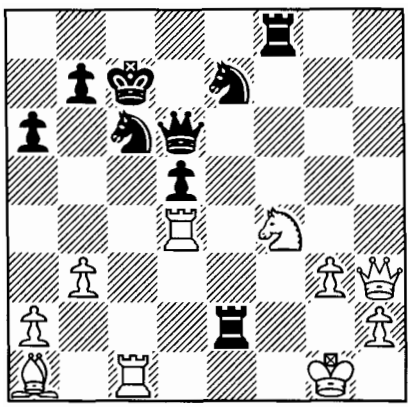
32...exd4 33 ♗b2 ♕xc5 34 ♖c1 ♕d6 35 ♕h3+ ♔c7 36 ♖xd4

There's no need to allow Black on to the seventh. Instead 36 ♗xd4 kept White on top.

36...♖e2 37 ♗a1 ♖f8?!

I imagine both players were in time trouble at this stage after such a complicated struggle. Here 37...♖xa2 would have made it anyone's game, as Black has not only recaptured his lost pawn, but also threatens 38...♖xa1!.

38 ♘f4!



38...♕e5!?

Objectively dubious, but a good try to complicate the issue.

39 ♘xe2 ♕xe2 40 g4?!

The ice-cool 40 ♖dd1!, keeping everything defended and not fearing the checks, would have kept White with a decisive advantage: e.g., 40...♕e3+ 41 ♔h1 ♖f2 42 ♗d4 ♕e4+ 43 ♔g1 ♖xa2 44 ♗c5 ♖e2 45 ♕f1 and Black's attack has run out of steam.

40...♖f3 41 ♕h6 ♕f2+ 42 ♔h1 ♕e2 43 ♔g1 ♕f2+ 44 ♔h1 ♕e2 45 ♖f4!

After repeating position a couple of times, Breder finds the right plan.

45...♕e3 46 ♖f6 ♕e4 47 ♖xf3 ♕xf3+ 48 ♔g1 ♕xg4+ 49 ♔f2 ♕f5+ 50 ♔g1 ♕g4+ 51 ♔f2 ♕f5+

51...d4! blocking the a1-bishop out of the game and opening up the d5-square for the black knight gave Black better chances of holding.

52 ♔e1 ♕e4+ 53 ♔d2 ♕g2+ 54 ♔d1 ♕f3+ 55 ♔c2 ♘f5 56 ♕d2 ♘e3+ 57 ♔b2 ♕f6+ 58 ♕c3 d4 59 ♕d3

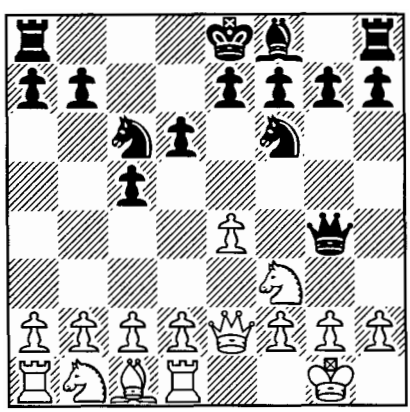
The white king has found sanctuary and now it isn't difficult to convert his extra material.

59...♔b8 60 ♔b1 ♕g7 61 ♖e1 ♘d5 62 ♕g3+ 1-0

An interesting game. I advise you to study this game in depth, as I believe that 7...g5!? is a critical test of our opening strategy. However, I believe White should still have good chances for an advantage.

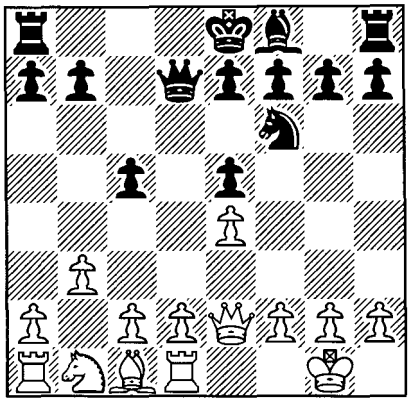
Game 15
V.Malakhov-A.Areshchenko
Moscow 2005

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 5 0-0 ♘f6 6 ♕e2 ♘c6 7 ♖d1 ♕g4



Areshchenko, a highly-rated Grandmaster who is currently ranked 73 in the world, was evidently surprised by our (and Malakhov's) unusual set-up and immediately tries to refute it, but this backfires badly.

7...♘e5 is a fairly common attempt in similar positions, although it is yet to be played here. I believe White can reach a promising position with 8 ♘xe5 dxe5 9 b3 when e5 is not so easy to defend:



a) 9...♕d4?! 10 ♕b5+ ♘d7 11 ♕xb7! ♖b8 12 ♕c6 ♕xa1 13 ♘c3 and the black queen will drop, leaving White with a very pleasant position.

b) 9...g6 10 ♗b2 ♕c7 11 ♘c3 ♗g7 12 ♕b5+ is rather awkward.

c) 9...♕c6 10 d3 g6 11 ♗b2 ♘d7 12 ♘d2 ♗g7 13 a4 0-0 14 ♘c4 and the pressure on e5 leaves White with a very promising position. Black lacks any counterplay whatsoever while White can slowly improve his position before breaking with f2-f4.

8 d3 ♘e5

Black has to try using his queen's position immediately or else he'll be pushed back with h2-h3 and 7...♕g4 will have been useless.

8...♘d4 9 ♘xd4 cxd4 10 f3 ♕d7 is given by Psakhis when 11 ♕f2 (the Israeli Grandmaster prefers 11 c3 which he judges as slightly better for White) 11...♖c8 (11...e5 12 c3 dxc3 13 ♘xc3 ♗e7 14 d4 is extremely good for White) 12 ♕xd4 e5! (Black has to play actively or he'll just be a pawn down for nothing) 13 ♕xa7 d5 14 ♗e3 dxe4 15 ♘d2 exd3 (15...exf3 16 ♘xf3 looks like a pawn up to me as 16...♖xc2? 17 ♘xe5 is a nightmare) 16 ♘e4! ♘xe4 17 fxe4 ♖xc2 18 ♕b8+ ♕d8 19 ♕xb7 ♗e7 20 ♕b5+ ♕d7 21 a4 ♕xb5 22 axb5 leaves the passed b-pawn extremely difficult to stop.

9 ♘bd2 e6?!

This logical move leaves Black with some surprisingly difficult problems.

9...♘h5 looks like the only way to make sense of 7...♕g4, although White has a few different ways to keep an advantage:

a) 10 h3 is Psakhis' suggestion. His line continues 10...♘f4 11 hxg4 ♘xe2+ 12 ♔f1, but here 12...♘d4 13 ♘xd4 cxd4 14 ♘b3 ♘c6 is only slightly better for White.

b) 10 ♕f1 ♘f4 11 ♔h1 is another of his ideas which keeps more material on the board. As Palliser observes, White is threatening to capture on e5 and put pressure on the e5-pawn while Black's pieces will slowly be pushed back. However, 11 ♘xe5?? immediately is bad on account of 11...♘h3+ 12 ♔h1 ♕xd1! winning the exchange.

c) 10 ♖e1!? also looks interesting as 10...♘f4 11 ♕f1 ♘c6 12 ♘c4 must favour White.

10 h3 ♕h5

This doesn't turn out well, so we should also examine:

a) 10...♘xf3+ 11 ♘xf3 ♕g6 12 e5 dxe5 13 d4!! is a very pretty idea to open up the position for the white queen which we'll see in the game. Then 13...♕e4 14 ♕b5+ ♕c6 15 ♕xc6+ bxc6 16 dxe5 is another line given by Psakhis when White has a great advantage thanks to Black's terrible c-pawns.

b) 10...♕g6 seems obligatory, although not at all what Black wanted. The simple 11 ♘xe5 dxe5 12 ♘c4 ♘d7 13 a4 ♗e7 14 ♖a3!? leaves Black with structural problems and no visible counterplay.

11 d4!

The correct move on principle. White is ahead in development and Black's king is still stuck in the centre for the time being, so it makes sense to open up the position.

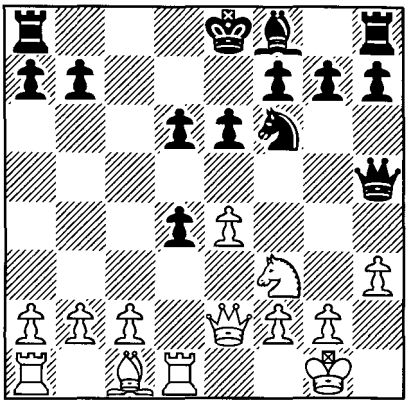
11...♘xf3+

Alternatively:

a) 11...♘ed7 12 e5 dxe5 13 dxe5 ♘d5 14 ♘e4 (Psakhis) followed by a subsequent c2-c4 leaves White with an overwhelming position. Just compare this to the best lines we get in the King's Indian Attack chapters.

b) 11...cxd4 12 ♕b5+ ♘fd7 13 ♕xb7 ♖b8 14 ♕xa7 ♘c6 15 ♕a4 ♕c5 16 ♕c4 and Black has no real compensation for the pawn.

12 ♘xf3 cxd4



Instead 12...a6 13 e5 ♘d7 14 g4! ♕xh3 15 ♘g5 ♕h4 16 ♕f3 (Psakhis) and Black has no way to defend the f7-pawn and thus his position collapses. Thus perhaps 12...♘d7 was his last chance, although 13 e5 d5 14 c4! dxc4 15 ♕xc4 a6 16 ♕c3 ♖c8 17 ♗e3 c4 18 d5 ♕f5 19 d6 is simply losing as the d6-pawn is worth a piece.

13 e5!

Exploiting Black's seventh move. The queen on h5 is now powerless to defend Black's king and the knight is not enough versus White's queen, rook and knight.

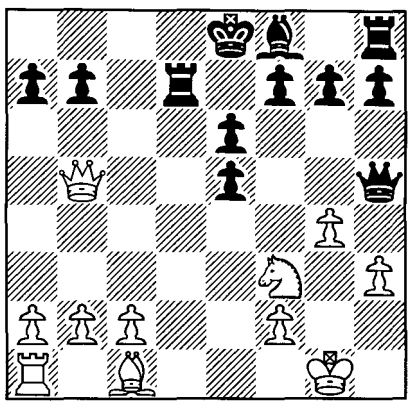
13...dxe5

Psakhis mentions 13...♘d7 14 exd6 ♗xd6?! (this loses but otherwise Black is a pawn down as well as everything else) 15 ♖xd4 ♕c5 (15...♗c5 16 ♖xd7! again shows that Black's queen is on the worst possible square), and now 16 ♗e3 looks simplest to me when Black cannot keep all his pieces: 16...♘f6 17 ♖ad1 ♗e7 is the only way to keep both bishop and knight, but 18 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 19 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 20 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 21 ♕e5 ♘d7 22 ♕xg7 ♖f8 23 ♘g5 is totally hopeless for Black.

14 ♕b5+ ♘d7 15 ♖xd4 ♖d8

15...0-0-0 is the other option, but Black is hardly going to survive for long. Perhaps the easiest is 16 ♖c4+ ♔b8 17 ♗e3 (threatening 18 ♗xa7+) 17...a6 18 ♕a5 ♗e7 19 ♖d1 and Black is losing at least a piece.

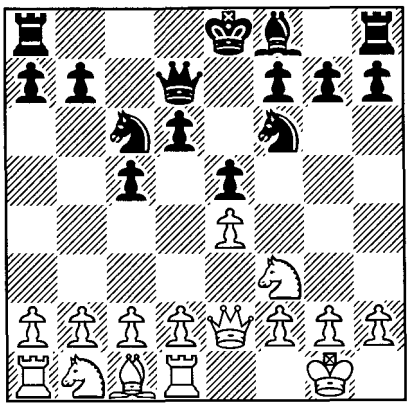
16 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 17 g4! 1-0



You don't often see such a strong grandmaster losing in 17 moves, which just shows that this line has a lot of venom.

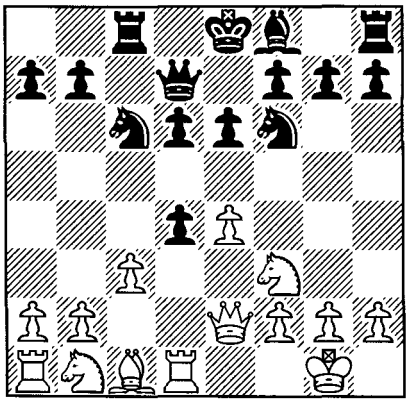
Game 16
L.Fressinet-H.Bricard
Bastia (rapid) 2005

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 5 0-0 ♘c6 6 ♕e2 ♘f6 7 ♖d1 e5



A fairly logical move to try and prevent White's d2-d4 break, but ultimately this leaves Black with a weak d6-pawn.

If your opponent catches on to your idea he may try the subtle 7...♖c8!?. The idea is to wait for us to declare our intentions with either c2-c3 or d2-d4 and only then decide whether or not to fianchetto the bishop. Black argues that the rook is useful on c8 anyway. White should try 8 c3 (8 d4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 g6 is of course Black's idea, which saw a recent outing in the game V.Yandemirov-A.Raykhman, Alushta 2009) 8...e6 9 d4 cxd4 and then:



a) 10 cxd4 d5 11 e5 ♘e4 is very similar to the main line of 7 c3 which we are endeavouring to avoid.

b) 10 ♗g5!? is an interesting nuance to keep your opponent out of his comfort zone. Now:

b1) 10...d3 was tried in a recent GM game, but 11 ♖xd3 ♘g4 (M.Palac-A.Jankovic, Banja Vrucica 2009) 12 ♗f4 e5 13 ♗g3 ♕e6 14 ♗h4!? looks good for White, again thanks to the backward d6-pawn and White's control over d5.

b2) 10...dxc3 11 ♘xc3 looks like a great version of the Morra Gambit, with intense pressure down the d-file and a promising lead in development.

c) 10...♗e7 11 cxd4 h6 12 ♗h4 (keeping some pieces on the board; 12 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 is another option, as in R.Ovetchkin-M.Kobalija, Togliatti 2003, and here White should strike with 13 e5 ♗e7 14 exd6 ♕xd6 – 14...♗xd6 15 d5 is very unpleasant – 15 ♘c3 0-0 16 d5 exd5 17 ♖xd5 ♕c7 18 ♖ad1 ♖fd8 19 g3 ♗b4 20 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 21 ♘d5 ♕a5 22 ♕c4 ♗c5 23 ♔g2 when Black hasn't quite equalized) 12...0-0 13 ♘c3 d5 14 ♘e5! ♕d8 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 exd5 exd5 17 f4 and White has a slight advantage thanks to the powerful e5-knight.

8 c3 ♗e7

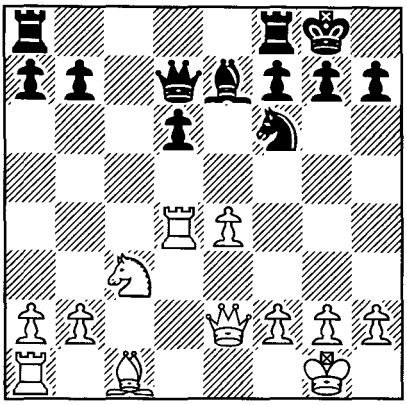
8...♕g4 would have similarities to the previous game, but here it makes sense to slow White's d2-d4 break. Nevertheless, after 9 d3 ♗e7 and now, instead of 10 ♘bd2 which allowed 10...d5 in S.Rublevsky-Z.Kozul, Tripoli 2004, I think Rublevsky should have tried 10 ♗g5 0-0 11 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 12 ♘bd2 as there are a couple of nice looking squares for the white knights.

9 d4 cxd4

9...♕g4 10 d5 ♘d8 11 ♘bd2 ♘h5 (P.Boukal-R.Vacek, Czech League 1995) 12 ♕b5+ ♕d7 13 a4 ♘f6 14 ♖e1 0-0 15 ♘c4 is more unpleasant for Black than it looks as his d8-knight is doomed to passivity.

10 cxd4 exd4 11 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 12 ♖xd4 0-0

13 ♘c3



This position has been reached a few times and White has done very well thanks to his possession of the d5 outpost and Black's vulnerable d6-pawn. Another problem for Black is that White has zero weaknesses and thus he has no counterplay.

13...♖fd8

13...♖fe8 has been tried more often, but White can continue with the same plan, with 14 ♗f4 and then:

a) 14...♕e6 15 ♖ad1 ♖ed8 16 ♕d3 ♘e8 17 ♘d5 ♗f6 18 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 19 e5 ♕e6 20 exd6 and White was already winning in R.Ovetchkin-Pham Minh Hoang, Internet (blitz) 2006.

b) 14...♕c6 15 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 16 h3 h6 17 ♕d3 a6 18 ♖c1 ♘h5 19 ♗e3 ♗f6 20 ♘d5 ♗xd4 21 ♖xc6 bxc6 22 ♘c7! ♗xe3 23 ♘xe8 ♗xf2+ 24 ♔xf2 ♖xe8 25 ♕xa6 was another very quick win in R.Cifuentes Parada-E.Knoppert, Enschede 1991.

c) 14...♗f8 15 ♖ad1 ♖e6 16 ♕d2 ♕e8 17 f3 ♖d8 18 ♖d3 h6 19 ♗e3 a6 was seen in A.Skripchenko-E.Najer, Internet (blitz) 2006. Surprisingly Black was rated over 2600 in this game and yet also got into this terrible position even if it was only blitz. Here 20 ♘e2! followed by 21 ♘f4 would have increased the pressure to boiling point.

14 ♗f4 ♕e6 15 ♖ad1 a6 16 ♕d3

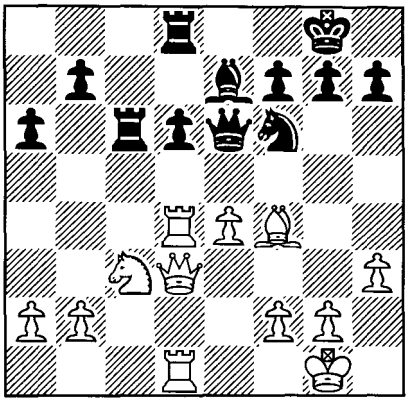
White's plan is not very complicated, but it is extremely effective. Already the d6-pawn is trembling.

16...♖ac8 17 h3

17 f3 might have been even stronger, strengthening the defence of the e4-pawn and not worrying about ghosts down the a7-g1 diagonal. White can take the pawn on d6 whenever he wishes.

17...♖c6?!

Holding on to the pawn, but was the greater evil. 17...b5 should have been tried, but 18 a4 ♖c4 19 axb5 ♖xd4 20 ♕xd4 axb5 21 f3 ♕c4 22 ♕d3! ♕xd3 23 ♖xd3 b4 24 ♘d5 ♘xd5 25 ♖xd5 is hardly a pleasant endgame; Black will be forced to give up the d6-pawn in order to save the one on b4.



18 ♘d5!

Fressinet doesn't miss the chance to jump into d5.

18...♗f8

Bricard couldn't afford for the e7-bishop to be taken, as then d6 would fall without a fight but this allows...

19 ♗g5!

...which is a rather unpleasant pin.

19...♖dc8?!

19...♗e7 was the only try, but White is spoilt for choice. 20 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 21 ♗f4

looks simplest, picking up the d6-pawn as 21...♘e8 22 e5 doesn't change anything.

20 ♗xf6 gxf6

Now Black also has problems with his king. The knight dominates the bishop, White has a better pawn structure, the more active pieces and a safer king.

21 b3 ♔h8 22 ♕f3 ♗g7 23 ♘e3 ♗f8 24 ♘f5 ♕e5 25 ♖d5 ♖c3 26 ♕g4 1-0

Game 17
D.Jakovenko-A.Naumann
Internet (blitz) 2006

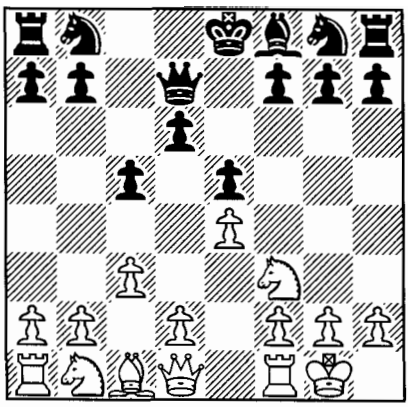
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 5 0-0 ♘c6

Here I should also mention:

a) 5...e6 6 ♕e2 ♗e7 7 ♖d1 will transpose to the first game of this chapter (Skripchenko-Bojkovic) as Black doesn't have a logical move that doesn't develop a knight.

b) 5...g6 6 c3 ♗g7 7 d4 cxd4 (7...♘f6 8 ♕e2 would transpose to Tkachiev-Fressinet) 8 cxd4 e6 (otherwise we'll transpose back to the types of position discussed in Tkachiev-Fressinet) 9 ♘c3 ♘e7 10 d5!? looks quite easy for White.

c) 5...e5 6 c3 is also likely to transpose to lines previously seen in the chapter.



Black once tried 6...f5?!, but this is premature: 7 exf5 ♗e7 (M.Fette-H.Reddmann, Hamburg 1991) 8 d4 cxd4 9 cxd4 e4 10 ♘g5 ♗xg5 (10...♕xf5 11 ♕b3!) 11 ♗xg5 ♕xf5 12 ♕b3! already gives White a decisive advantage.

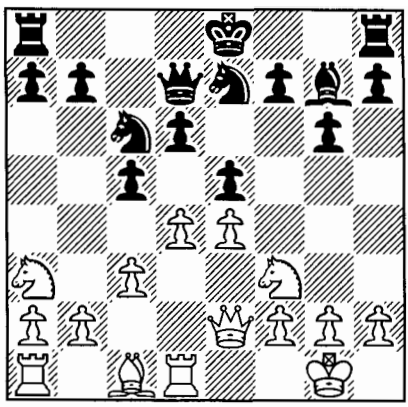
6 ♕e2 g6

6...e5 is the only independent try I can see here, although following 7 c3 it is likely to transpose either to this or the previous game.

7 c3 ♗g7 8 ♖d1 e5

8...♖c8!? is another interesting way to delay White breaking in the centre. I think we should play slowly here with 9 d3 (9 d4? cxd4 10 cxd4 ♘xd4 11 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 is the problem when c1 hangs) 9...♘f6 10 h3 0-0 11 ♗e3 followed by 12 ♘bd2 and ultimately d3-d4.

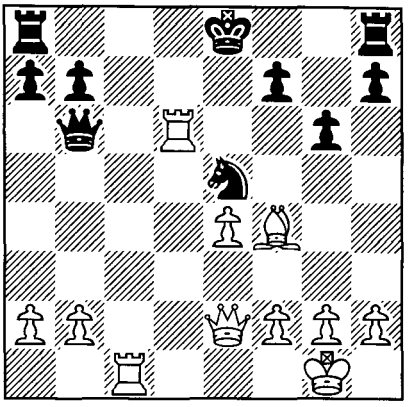
9 ♘a3 ♘ge7 10 d4



10...cxd4

Initially I thought this line would be seen rather rarely, but in the first round of a local weekend tournament my opponent tried this set-up. He continued with 10...exd4 11 cxd4 ♘xd4 12 ♘xd4 ♗xd4? (very greedy; instead 12...cxd4 would transpose to the note to Black's 11th, below) 13 ♘b5 ♘c6 14 ♗f4! (Black cannot keep his extra pawn and has compromised his posi-

tion for nothing) 14...♘e5 15 ♘xd4 cxd4 16 ♖xd4 ♕c6? (this allows a pretty finish but White was already winning at least a pawn) 17 ♖c1 ♕b6 18 ♖xd6!



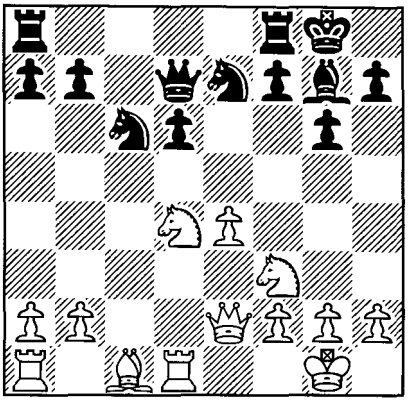
18...♕xd6 19 ♕b5+ ♔d8 20 ♗xe5 ♕d2 21 ♗f6 mate (1-0), G.Jones-C.O'Donnell, Dun Laoghaire 2010.

11 cxd4 exd4

Or 11...♘xd4 12 ♘xd4 exd4 13 ♘b5 ♘c6 14 ♗f4 0-0 (14...♗e5 is rather greedy as 15 ♗h6 prevents Black from castling) 15 ♘xd6 ♘e5 16 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 17 ♘c4 ♗g7 with an interesting battle between the bishop and knight, J.Delachaux-M.Guillet, French League 1999. Personally I'd prefer White here as the bishop on g7 is stuck behind his own pawn on d4, whereas White can play around the pawn.

12 ♘b5 0-0 13 ♘bxd4

White's advantage is not very large, but nevertheless I think the position is easier for him to play as Black has to always worry about his d-pawn. This line was actually seen for the first time a long time ago and a certain Bobby Fischer tried 13 ♘fxd4 here. Following 13...d5 14 ♘b3 a6 15 ♘c3 d4 16 ♘a4 ♖ae8 17 ♗f4 (17 ♘ac5 ♕c7 18 ♗d2 is promising for White) 17...♘d5 18 ♗g3 ♕e7 19 ♘ac5 ♔h8 in R.Fischer-F.Olafsson, Mar del Plata 1960, ganging up on the d4-pawn with 20 ♕d2 ♘f6 21 f3 ♘h5 22 ♗f2 looks extremely pleasant.



13...a6

Black can also try:

a) 13...d5 14 ♘xc6 bxc6 15 ♗g5 ♖fe8 16 ♕d2 prevents Black from equalizing entirely.

b) 13...♘xd4 14 ♘xd4 and then:

b1) 14...♖fe8 15 ♘b5 d5 16 ♗f4 already left Black in some problems and following 16...d4 17 ♘c7 ♘d5 18 ♘xe8 ♘xf4 19 ♕f3 ♖xe8 20 ♕xf4 White was already winning in E.Korbut-M.Calzetta Ruiz, Chisinau 2005.

b2) 14...d5 was seen in L.Fressinet-I.Smirin, Plovdiv 2003, when I think White should play the immediate 15 e5 ♘c6 16 f4, forcing Black to play accurately to get his bishop out of jail.

14 ♗f4

This was an interesting point to change the structure with 14 ♘xc6!? bxc6 15 ♗f4 (15 ♗e3!? followed by 16 ♗d4 also favours White) 15...d5 16 e5 when Black has a vulnerable c5-square and thus White can combine attacks on both flanks.

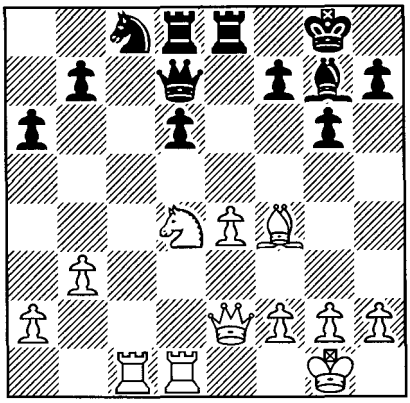
14...♖ad8

14...♘xd4 had to be played at this point, although Black is still under a little pressure.

15 ♖ac1

15 ♘xc6! would have picked up a pawn as 15...♕xc6 16 ♖ac1 ♕b6 17 b3 is extremely unpleasant.

15...♘xd4 16 ♘xd4 ♖fe8 17 b3 ♘c8?!



This leaves Naumann with severe problems. He should have exploited the pin with 17...♘d5! which seems to equalize, such as after 18 ♗g5 ♖c8 19 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 20 ♘b5 ♘c3! 21 ♘xc3 ♕xc3.

18 ♕f3

I wonder if Jakovenko realized that this move lost a pawn. 18 f3 looks better, keeping the pawn, when Black's only chance for counterplay lies with 18...f5 (if 18...d5 19 ♖c7), but after 19 ♕e3 fxe4 20 fxe4 the c8-knight continues to be a problem for Black.

18...♕e7 19 ♗e3 ♕xe4 20 ♖c7 ♕xf3 21 ♘xf3

Despite dropping a pawn, Jakovenko still holds the advantage thanks to his mega rook on the seventh rank and Black's passivity.

21...♖e7 22 ♖dc1 ♖xc7 23 ♖xc7 b6 24 ♘g5

So White has actually succeeded in winning back the pawn whilst retaining the pressure.

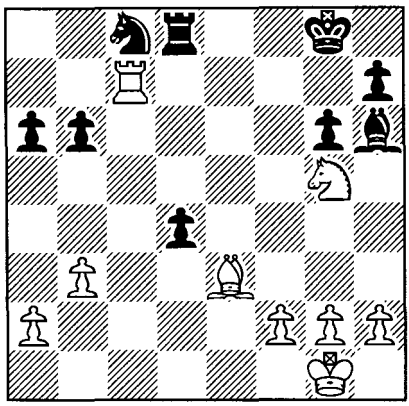
24...d5

24...♖f8?! doesn't prevent 25 ♘xf7!.

25 ♖xf7!?

25 ♘xf7 ♖e8 26 ♔f1 d4 27 ♗h6 ♖e7 28 ♖xc8+ ♔xf7 29 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 30 ♖d8 would leave Black in a very difficult ending.

25...♗h6 26 ♖c7 d4



27 ♘f7!

Accurately calculated by the supergrandmaster.

27...dxe3 28 ♘xh6+ ♔f8 29 fxe3

So White is now a pawn up and Naumann's position collapses extremely quickly.

29...♖d1+ 30 ♔f2 ♘d6 31 ♖c6 ♘e4+ 32 ♔f3 ♘c5 33 ♖xb6 ♔g7 34 ♘g4 h5 35 ♘e5 g5 36 ♖g6+ ♔h7 37 ♖xg5 1-0

Conclusion

This chapter has covered Black's most common defence to 3 ♗b5+. However, I think the plan of 6 ♕e2 followed by 7 ♖d1 gives White good chances for an advantage and, perhaps more importantly, will put your opponent on the back foot. The plan of waiting for Black to commit is rather subtle and it's likely that your opponent won't understand your intention until it is too late!

Chapter Three
Moscow Variation: 3...♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7

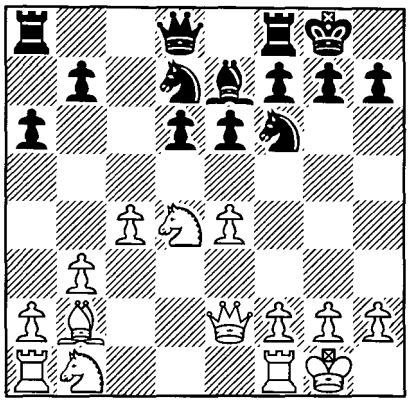
This is the poor cousin of 4...♕xd7. Although the knight recapture develops a piece, in practice Black has favoured the more active posting of the knight on c6. On d7 the knight places no pressure on the centre, in particular on the important d4-square, and thus allows White a safe space advantage. The position often resembles a Hedgehog-style structure with Black solid but passive. Again White must be careful not to allow either the ...b7-b5 or ...d6-d5 breaks. I advocate playing in the same manner as we do after 4...♕xd7.

5 0-0

I was initially attracted to 5 c4!?, but 5...♘e5! is rather annoying to deal with. This is a useful idea to remember, and to try and prevent. The point is that following 6 ♘xe5 dxe5 Black has the d4-outpost and pressure down the d-file which is more important than the doubled e-pawns.

5...♘gf6 6 ♕e2 e6 7 b3 ♗e7 8 ♗b2 0-0 9 c4 a6 10 d4 cxd4 11 ♘xd4

This is the main line of the 4...♘xd7 system and you should make sure you feel comfortable here and are au fait with the plans for both sides.



The position is very similar to Skripchenko-Bojkovic (Game 11) of the previous chapter. The difference is that with the knight on d7, the break with ...d6-d5 is extremely hard to achieve and White has less pressure on his position. On the other hand, Black has already developed all his pieces so his problem is how he should proceed.

Games 18, 19 and 21 feature Maroczy Bind structures where we can try putting

pressure on Black's d6-pawn. We have already seen this structure in the previous couple of chapters. Elsewhere, Game 20 examines what happens when Black prevents us from opening the centre and a slower manoeuvring battle is in prospect. In Game 22 we look at Boris Gelfand's interesting fianchetto idea, but a new idea here leaves White with the better chances. Finally, in Games 23 and 24 we occupy the centre with c3 and d4 when Black delays ...e6.

Repertoire Outline

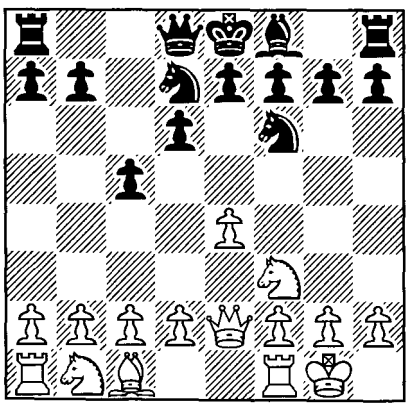
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 5 0-0 ♘gf6

By far the most common response. Others:

a) 5...g6 6 c3 ♗g7 (6...♘gf6 7 ♕e2 would transpose to 5...♘gf6 6 c3 g6) 7 d4 cxd4 8 cxd4 is likely to transpose to the main line. 8...e6 is Black's only independent try – see the notes to Game 23.

b) 5...e6 has been tried by the strong English Grandmaster Matthew Sadler, but is likely to transpose after 6 ♕e2. I discuss this briefly in Game 18.

6 ♕e2



6...e6

Again by far the most common response, but practice has seen too:

a) 6...g6 has been the choice of some strong grandmasters, but 7 c3 ♗g7 8 d4 leaves White with a comfortable advantage – see Game 23.

b) The subtle 6...♖c8 is fairly rare, but has the highest-rating average of all Black's 6th moves. This is a clever idea, waiting to see how we react. However White still has good chances for an advantage, as explained in Game 24.

c) 6...♕c7 is a worse version of 'b' and is also covered in Game 24.

d) 6...e5 doesn't prevent us occupying the centre and is seen in Game 20 notes.

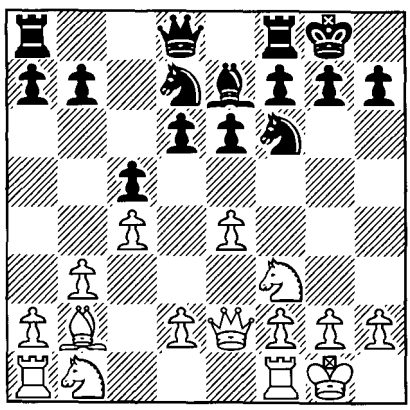
7 b3

I also take a look at the alternative move order 7 d4 in Game 18.

7...♗e7

7...g6 is exceedingly rare, but as this was once Garry Kasparov's choice we should take it seriously – see Game 22.

8 ♗b2 0-0 9 c4



This is the main-line position of 4...♘xd7 and I examine various replies by Black here:

a) 9...♖c8 as tried by the strong Chinese Grandmaster Bu Xiangzhi,

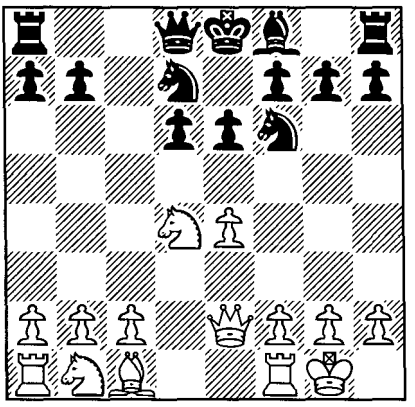
b) 9...♕c7 also tried by some strong GMs, and

c) 9...♖e8, the choice of the Bosnian

Grandmaster Ivan Sokolov, are likely to reach positions very similar to the main line. They are all covered in Game 21.

d) 9...e5 is definitely an important possibility and was tried by the Latvian-Spaniard grandmaster Alexei Shirov, as we'll see in Game 20.

e) 9...a6 10 d4 cxd4 11 ♘xd4 is the most important option and has been tried by both Magnus Carlsen and the World's strongest female player, Judit Polgar. I look at this position in Games 18 and 19.



Game 18
V.Malakhov-Z.Kozul
Croatian Team Championship 2008

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 5 0-0 ♘gf6

After 5...e6 6 b3 (6 c4 would also likely transpose to the game) 6...♗e7 (6...♘gf6 would transpose back to the game) White has:

a) 7 ♗b2 would be normal, but allows 7...♗f6!? which was essayed a couple of times by Anglo-French GM Tony Kosten and is rather annoying.

b) I think 7 ♕e2 may be a more accurate move order. Now if Black tries 7...♗f6 8 c3 ♘e7 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 ♘c6, as he did in J.Estrada Nieto-F.Hoelzl, Szentgotthard 2001, 11 ♖d1 0-0 12 ♗a3 would exploit the location of the black bishop.

6 ♕e2 e6 7 d4

White has a couple of different move orders with which to reach a Maroczy Bind set-up. Starting with 7 b3 will be examined in the following game, and you should be aware that the immediate 7 c4 would allow the annoying 7...♘e5!.

7...cxd4 8 ♘xd4

8...♗e7

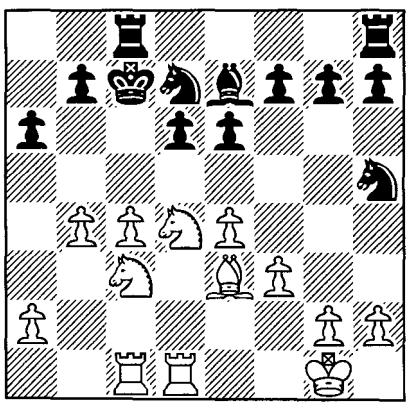
Black has also been known to try:

a) 8...a6 is tried reasonably frequently. This is likely to transpose after 9 c4, although Richard Palliser's suggestion of 9...g6!? deserves consideration. The bishop is generally better on the long diagonal in these Maroczy structures, although Black will have to be careful that his weak d6-pawn doesn't drop. Now:

a1) 10 ♘f3 ♕c7 11 ♖d1 ♖c8 12 b3 ♗g7 13 ♘c3 0-0 14 ♗f4 ♘e5 15 ♘xe5 dxe5 16 ♗d2 ♖fd8 17 ♘a4 ♖d4 18 f3 ♖cd8 19 ♗e3 ♖xd1+ 20 ♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 21 ♕xd1 and the ♗b5 man himself had a small nibble which he eventually exploited in S.Rublevsky-A.Istratescu, Niksic 1997.

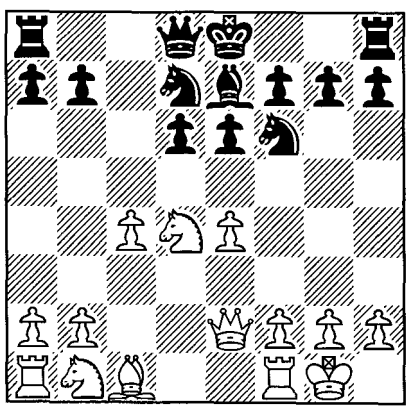
a2) 10 ♖d1 ♕c7 11 ♘c3 ♗g7 12 ♘db5!? was an interesting piece sacrifice essayed in S.Kristjansson-C.Balogh, Turin Olympiad 2006. That continued 12...axb5 13 ♘xb5 ♕c6 14 ♖xd6 ♕c5?! (14...♕c8! looks safer; White can retrieve his piece with 15 e5 ♘h5 16 g4, but 16...0-0! 17 gxh5 ♘xe5 leaves Black with the safer king and the initiative) 15 ♗e3 ♕h5 when the Icelandic IM should have played 16 ♘c7+ ♔e7 17 ♕d2, picking up the exchange and leaving White slightly for preference as 17...♖ac8 18 ♕b4! is extremely unpleasant.

b) 8...♘c5!? is also an option which has been allowed by this move order and was a favourite of Efim Geller. Black puts pressure on e4 before we have been able to play c2-c4 and so tries to compromise our plan. No lesser game than V.Korchnoi-A.Miles, Linares 1985, continued 9 f3 ♕b6 10 ♕b5+!? (the Old Man of Chess decides to get the queens off against the dangerous Englishman) 10...♕xb5 11 ♘xb5 ♔d7 12 ♖d1 ♔c6 13 c4 a6 14 ♘d4+ ♔c7 15 ♘c3 ♗e7 16 ♗f4! ♘cd7 17 ♖ac1 ♘h5 18 ♗e3 ♖ac8 19 b4



and White had a more or less ideal position, having left Black cramped and without counterplay.

9 c4



9...a6

Black generally plays this move sooner or later, taking control of the b5-square, preventing a white knight from hitting the vulnerable d6-pawn and preparing the ...b7-b5 break himself. Lines in which Black doesn't play ...a7-a6 are examined in Timman-Giardelli later in the chapter.

9...0-0 has been the more common move order. It is likely it will just transpose to the game after 10 b3 a6 11 ♗b2, but Palliser's suggestion of 10...♕b6!? 11 ♗b2 ♖fe8 is slightly annoying:

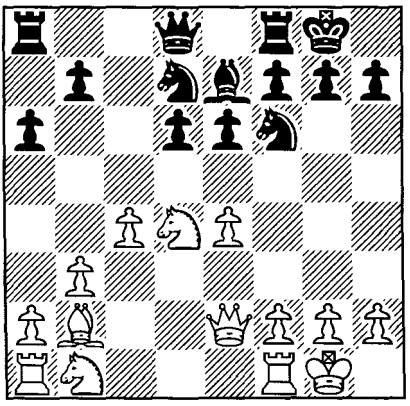
a) Comparing the position to the note to Black's 11th move in our main game, 12 ♘c2 could be tried. Then, however, 12...d5!? looks interesting: for example, 13 e5 ♘e4 14 ♘d2 ♘xd2 15 ♕xd2 ♖ad8 16 cxd5 exd5 17 ♖ad1 ♕a6, but White should still have something here thanks to the isolated d-pawn and pleasant d4-outpost.

b) Perhaps 12 ♔h1!? could be tried here, but again 12...d5!? looks like a possible antidote although the lines are very complicated: 13 e5 ♘e4 (13...♗c5!? 14 ♘c3! is complex but seems to favour White) 14 f3 ♘ec5 15 ♖d1!? (15 cxd5 ♘xe5! equalizes as 16 ♕xe5?! ♘d3 17 ♕e2 ♘xb2 18 ♕xb2 ♗f6 19 ♖d1 ♖ad8 wins back the piece and leaves Black much better, but even after 16 dxe6 ♗f6! Black is fine) 15...dxc4 16 ♘a3 (16 ♘d2 ♘xe5! again looks to equalize for Black) 16...cxb3 17 ♘c4 ♕c7 18 axb3 with decent play for the pawn but perhaps no more than that.

c) A recent game continued 12 ♖d1. We don't really want to move this rook as the other rook belongs on d1, but Bojkov wants to keep the knight centrally placed. D.Bojkov-R.Dabetic, Cetinje 2009, saw 12...♘c5 13 ♘c3 ♖ad8 14 ♘c2 a6 and here I think White should juggle his rooks with 15 ♖d2 ♕c6 16 ♖e1, with a typical position for

this line. White has successfully prevented Black from his freeing pawn breaks and thus has a slight spatial advantage. Black has to sit and wait while White should prepare an expansion on the kingside with ♔h1 and f2-f4.

10 b3 0-0 11 ♗b2



And so we're back at the mainline position that will be reached in the next game by the more common move order, beginning with 7 b3.

11...♖c8

11...♕b6!? is the same idea as we've already seen in the notes to Black's 9th move. Black wants to disrupt White's development and prevent the knight coming out to c3, at least immediately. White would prefer his queenside rook on d1 as he plans to expand on the kingside with a subsequent f2-f4 and e4-e5 once all the preparatory moves have been made. Here 12 ♘c2 (12 ♖d1 would likely transpose to the aforementioned note, while 12 ♔h1 preparing f2-f4 has also been tried) 12...♖ac8 13 ♘c3 ♖fe8 14 ♔h1 ♕c5 15 ♖ac1 ♕h5 16 ♕xh5 ♘xh5 17 g3 was seen in M.Adams-S.Tiviakov, 12th matchgame, New York 1994. These endgames are always a little easier to play with White as he can continue to put pressure on Black's d6-pawn whilst expanding. This type of endgame will be examined in depth in the next game, Anand-Carlsen.

12 ♘c3 ♕a5

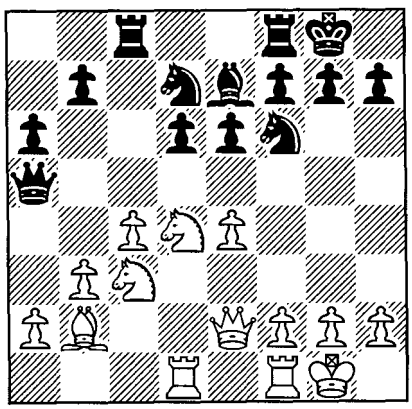
Black has tried a few different queen moves here, but it doesn't make a great difference to the position. Both sides manoeuvre, bringing their pieces to the most useful squares while at the same time preventing each other's plans. White's plan is to either break with e4-e5, causing disarray in Black's position, or else slowly advancing his pawns to squash Black's passive position. Meanwhile Black's plan is to liberate his position with ...b7-b5 or ...d6-d5 and he has to be patient waiting for his chance.

Alternatives:

a) 12...♖e8 would transpose to the following game.

b) 12...♕b6 13 ♖ad1 ♘e5 14 ♔h1 ♘c6 was played in Z.Azmaiparashvili-A.Chernin, Tilburg 1994, when 15 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 (15...bxc6 16 e5!? dxe5 17 ♕xe5 ♖fd8 18 ♘e4 leaves White a little better, although of course it was possible to continue with 16 ♖d3 too) 16 f4 ♕c7 (16...♘d7 17 ♘d5!) 17 ♖d2 ♖d8 18 ♖fd1 ♘e8 19 e5!? dxe5 20 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 21 fxe5 ♗e7 22 ♖f1 would keep Black under pressure.

13 ♖ad1



13...♖fe8

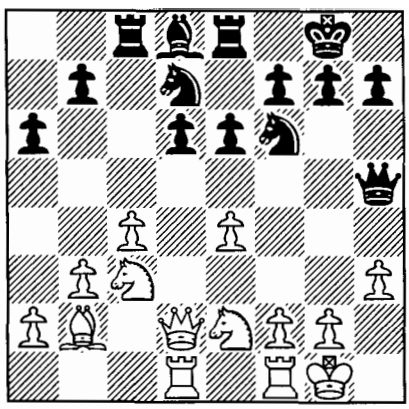
Black must sit tight and wait in the hope that we will overextend. As Palliser observes, 13...b5?, while desirable, is unplayable here as 14 cxb5 ♖xc3? 15 ♗xc3 ♕xc3 16 ♘c6! leaves Black with problems with both his queen and bishop. However, I can't stress how important it is to always make sure that ...b7-b5 isn't playable.

13...♕h5 14 ♕xh5 ♘xh5 would be very similar to the next game, although it's an improved version for us as Black's ...♖e8 is more useful than our ♔h1.

14 ♕d2!?

With Black's last move he actually transposed into the position which will also be seen in the next game. Here Malakhov decides to keep the queens on the board and prepares the positional threat of ♘c3-d5, whereas in Game 19 Anand continues with 14 ♔h1.

14...♕h5 15 h3 ♗d8 16 ♘de2



Malakhov is playing very patiently. First he makes sure that Black has no counterplay and then reminds him of the frail d6-pawn.

16...♘c5?!

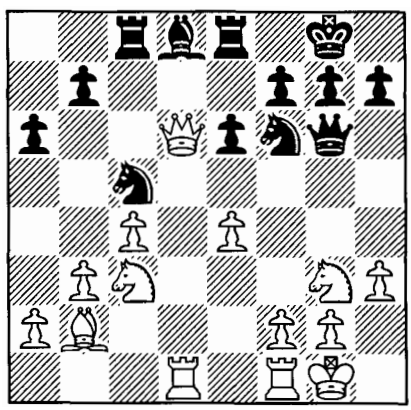
A bid for play but objectively dubious. 16...♗c7 is offered by Palliser, although I think White still has a pleasant advantage following 17 ♗a3 ♖ed8 18 ♗xd6 ♘e5 19 c5 ♘e8 (Palliser) 20 ♕e3 ♗xd6 (20...♘xd6 21 cxd6 ♗xd6 22 ♕b6 ♘c6 23 ♕xb7 ♕e5 24 g3 leaves White with an extra pawn for insufficient compensation) 21 cxd6 ♘xd6 22 f4 ♘c6 23 e5 ♘e8 (23...♘f5 24 ♕b6 is extremely awkward) 24 ♘e4. The knight looks really passive on e8, but if it moves then d6 will become a big hole.

Perhaps Kozul should have swallowed his pride and repeated with 16...♗e7, although here too White can continue putting pressure on d6 with 17 ♗a3.

17 ♘g3

Malakhov first defends e4 before snaffling the d6-pawn. The immediate 17 ♕xd6!? was also possible: 17...♗c7 (17...♘cxe4 18 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 19 ♘g3! ♕g6 would in fact transpose to the note to Black's 18th move, below) 18 ♕d4 ♗b6 looks dangerous, but after the accurate 19 ♕e3 ♘a4 20 ♕c1 ♘xb2 21 ♕xb2 Black doesn't have that much for the pawn.

17...♕g6 18 ♕xd6



18...♗a5

Palliser condemns this move but I think he is being harsh. It's true that Black must now play a knight versus bishop position where, with pawns on both sides of the board, the bishop is likely to dominate.

However, the logical 18...♘cxe4 looks unpleasant for Black: 19 ♘cxe4 ♘xe4 20 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 21 ♕g3!? (21 ♖fe1 ♕f5 22 ♖d5 ♕g6 23 ♕d7 ♗f6 24 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 25 ♖dd1 ♖b8 is given by Palliser when it's not easy to break through for White, although Black is exceedingly passive) 21...♕g6 22 ♕f3 b5 23 ♕b7 (a nice piece of geometry to find a way in to Black's queenside) 23...♗e7 24 ♖d7 ♗f8 25 cxb5 axb5 26 ♕xb5 ♖c2 27 ♗a3! ♗xa3 28 ♖a7 ♖ec8 29 ♖xa3 and White's queenside pawns are quick.

19 ♕e5 h5

This looks like a weakness, but Black has to force one of the pieces defending e4 away. Instead 19...♗xc3 20 ♕xc3 ♘fxe4 21 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 22 ♕e3 is unpleasant as Black's queenside is so vulnerable.

20 ♕f4

20 ♖fe1 would allow Black decent compensation with 20...b5!?, while 20...h4 21 ♘ge2 ♗c7 22 ♕d4 ♘cxe4 he would regain the pawn anyway.

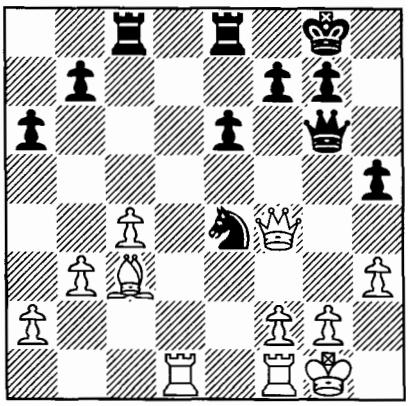
20...♗xc3

Kozul decides it's time to recapture his pawn.

20...♖ed8 is another option, delaying the recapture for the moment. However, as Palliser points out, 21 ♕e3! ♗xc3 22 ♗xc3 ♖xd1 23 ♖xd1 h4 24 ♘e2 ♘cxe4 is better for White. Indeed I believe he can start targeting the queenside at once with 25 ♕b6!? (25 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 26 ♘c3 is a safer option and 25 ♗b4!? is also interesting) 25...♕h5 26 ♔f1 ♕f5 27 ♗d4 ♖f8 28 ♗e3 when Black's temporary kingside initiative has abated while once the b7-pawn has gone the c4-pawn will be extremely strong.

21 ♗xc3 ♘fxe4 22 ♘xe4 ♘xe4

So we have a typical bishop against knight position which should favour White thanks to the open diagonals for the bishop and the presence of pawns on both flanks.



23 ♗b4

Considering the next note, perhaps 23 ♗e5 would have been more accurate. Now if Black tries 23...b5 then 24 ♖fe1 ♘g5 (24...♘f6 25 ♖e3! leaves White with a huge attack) 25 ♕g3 bxc4 26 f4 ♘h7 27 ♕xg6 fxg6 28 bxc4 ♖xc4 29 ♖d7 ♘f6 30 ♖a7 ♖a4 31 ♖b1 looks very dangerous for him despite his extra pawn.

23...e5

Going for activity, but ceding the d5-square.

Black should have tried 23...b5! 24 ♖fe1. Here instead of Palliser's suggestion of 24...♘f6 25 ♗d6 bxc4 26 bxc4 ♖c6 27 ♖e5 when Black would still be left with a few problems, he should play 24...♘g5 as 25 ♕g3 (25 ♔h2!? is the best winning try) 25...bxc4 26 h4 ♘h7 27 ♕xg6 fxg6 would be fine for Black here as the bishop doesn't put pressure on g7.

24 ♕e3 h4 25 ♖d7

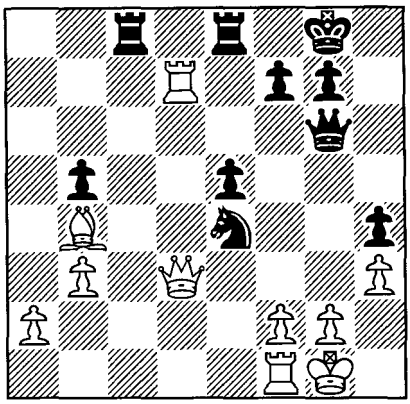
A very logical move but this allows Black a tactical opportunity. Palliser correctly observes that 25 ♖fe1! was a more accurate move order and only after 25...♘g5 should we play 26 ♖d7.

25...b5 26 cxb5 axb5

This leaves Black with big problems. Instead he should have tried the surprising

26...♘f6! 27 ♖d6 axb5, as Palliser correctly points out, although here White still holds the initiative after 28 ♕e2.

27 ♕d3



27...f5

Kozul sacrifices the pawn in a belated attempt for some counterplay. The passive 27...♕c6 should really have been preferred, but understandably Kozul didn't want to suffer for the rest of the game after 28 ♕d5! ♖e6 29 a3!?.

28 ♕xb5 ♘g5 29 ♖d6 ♕h5 30 ♕d5+

Malakhov continues his policy of zero risk, although I would have been tempted by 30 a4 when that pawn is very quick.

30...♔h8 31 ♕d1 ♕h7 32 ♖e1 e4 33 ♕d5 ♕h5 34 ♕d1 ♕h7

After repeating a couple of times to gain time, Malakhov now finds the correct path.

35 a4 ♘f7 36 ♖d5 ♘e5 37 a5 ♕g6

Kozul needs to keep up some threats or the game is all over. It was possible to pick up material with 37...♘d3, but 38 ♖xd3 exd3 39 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 40 ♕xd3 is simply winning for White as the queenside pawns are just too strong.

38 ♖d6 ♕f7 39 ♕d4!?

The Russian accurately assesses that b3 is too hot a pawn to grab. However, Palliser's suggestion of 39 ♖e3!? looked very simple.

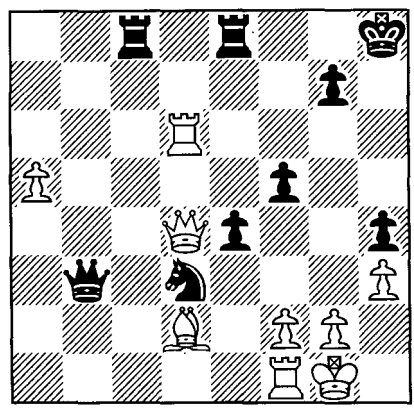
39...♘d3

If 39...♕xb3 40 ♗d2 ♕f7 (or 40...♕c4 41 ♖a1 and the a-pawn is too strong) 41 a6 ♖c4 42 ♕d5 ♖a4 43 ♕b7! and Black will have to give up major material to prevent another white queen appearing.

40 ♖f1

A slightly inaccurate 40th move which presumably was made under time constraints. Getting behind the pawn with 40 ♖a1! looked much more logical.

40...♕xb3 41 ♗d2



The a-pawn is still the most important aspect in this position and so Black's position is hopeless. Malakhov now displays good technique to bring home the full point:

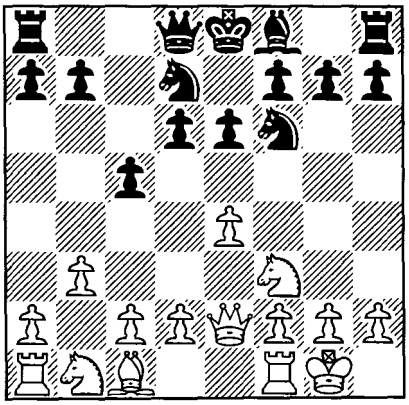
41...♘e5 42 ♗f4 ♘d3 43 ♗g5 ♖e6 44 a6 ♖xd6 45 ♕xd6 ♕a4 46 ♗e3 f4 47 ♗d4 ♔h7 48 a7 ♕e8 49 ♖a1 e3 50 ♗xe3 ♕e4 51 ♕d4 ♕g6 52 a8♕ ♖xa8 53 ♖xa8 ♘e1 54 ♕d5 1-0

Game 19
V.Anand-M.Carlsen
Mainz (rapid) 2008

A match-up between the man who would soon become World Champion and

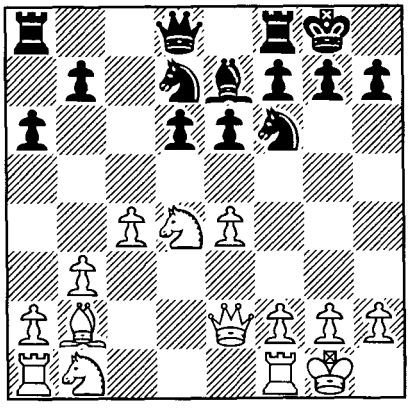
the Norwegian who would become the World's highest-rated player. Who could ask for more?

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 5 0-0 ♘gf6 6 ♕e2 e6 7 b3



This is the more common move order to reach the main tabiya. While preventing certain lines, 8...♘c5 and 8...a6 primarily, 7 b3 also allows Black certain other options such as 7...g6 and 9...e5, which will be seen later on. It is up to you which move order you prefer – strong players have adopted both – but the consensus appears to be that 7 b3 is the more accurate and indeed Anand is a good player to follow!

7...♗e7 8 ♗b2 0-0 9 c4 a6 10 d4 cxd4 11 ♘xd4



11...♖e8

Alternatively:

a) 11...♖c8 was seen in the previous game although it actually transposes.

b) 11...♕c7 will be seen in the notes to Black's 9th move in Timman-Giardelli.

c) 11...♕a5 12 ♘c3 ♖fc8 (anything else would transpose to our main game) 13 ♔h1 (13 ♖ad1 immediately is of course also good) 13...♘e8 14 ♖ac1 (14 f4 followed by 15 ♖ad1 would be my choice) 14...♗f6 15 ♖fd1 ♖c7 16 f4 ♖ac8 17 ♘a4 b5 18 ♗c3 b4 19 ♗e1 ♘c5 20 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 21 ♗f2 ♕a5 22 ♘f3 and Black was already in trouble in S.Movsesian-K.Hulak, Porec 1998.

12 ♘c3 ♖c8 13 ♖ad1 ♕a5

So Carlsen too opts to develop his queen to a5 and thence across to h5. This stops the type of powerful attack we will see in the notes to Timman-Giardelli, but leaves Black in a rather unpleasant endgame in which he has to defend tenaciously for the half-point while at the same time having no real winning chances.

14 ♔h1

14 ♕d2 was tried by Malakhov in the previous game, but here Anand was happy with the queen exchange.

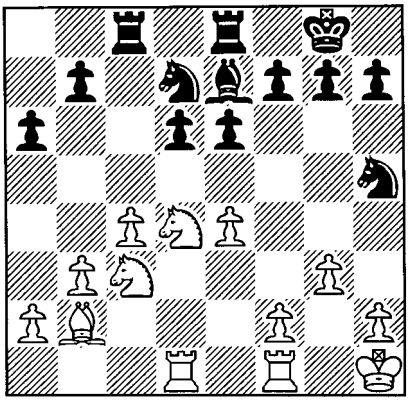
14...♕h5

Instead 14...♗f8 15 f4 ♕h5 was suggested by Palliser, hoping that f4 will turn out to be a weakness. However, here White doesn't have to acquiesce to the queen exchange and 16 ♘f3, threatening 17 e5, looks dangerous for Black (certainly White shouldn't try 16 ♕e3? ♕xh2+, as occurred in V.Bhat-W.Browne, San Francisco 2000). Black can try 16...e5 17 f5 ♖c6, but following 18 h3 ♖ec8 19 ♕e3 I'd certainly prefer White.

14...♗d8 was tried in another game of Kozul's: 15 f4 ♗c7 16 ♖d3 (16 g4!? looks dangerous) 16...♗b8 17 ♖h3 ♕c5 18 ♘f3 b5

19 e5! dxe5 20 fxe5 ♘xe5 was V.Iordachescu-Z.Kozul, Dresden 2008, when 21 ♘a4! bxa4 22 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 23 ♗xe5 would have left White with an unstoppable attack.

15 ♕xh5 ♘xh5 16 g3



Anand has the position he was aiming for. With the queens off the board he is able to play without any risk, while at the same time having good winning chances. It's instructive how he slowly expands on the kingside until Carlsen is in dire straits.

16...♘hf6 17 ♔g2

The previous game to reach this position continued 17 ♖d2 and I've decided to give the whole game as the Swedish Grandmaster displays great technique to wear his opponent down: 17...♘c5 18 f3 ♖ed8 19 ♖fd1 h6 20 ♘c2 ♔f8 21 ♔g2 ♘e8 22 ♘e3 ♗f6 23 ♘g4 ♗e7 24 ♘f2 ♗f6 25 f4 h5 26 e5! dxe5 27 b4 ♖xd2 28 ♖xd2 e4 29 bxc5 e3 30 ♖d7 exf2 31 ♖xb7 ♗d4 32 ♘a4 ♗xb2 33 ♖xb2 ♘f6 34 ♔xf2 ♘e4+ 35 ♔e3 ♘xc5 36 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 37 ♔d4 ♖c7 38 ♖b6 ♖d7+ 39 ♔c3 ♖d1 40 ♖xa6 ♖h1 41 c5 ♖xh2 42 ♖a8+ ♔e7 43 ♖a7+ ♔d8 44 ♖xf7 ♖xa2 45 ♖xg7 ♖g2 46 ♖g5 ♖f2 47 ♖xh5 ♖f3+ 48 ♔d4 ♖xg3 49 ♔e5 ♖f3 50 ♔d6 ♔c8 51 ♖h8+ ♔b7 52 c6+ 1-0 S.Brynell-B.Svensson, Swedish Team Championship 1999.

17...♖c7 18 f3

No rush. White should make sure everything is defended before doing anything rash.

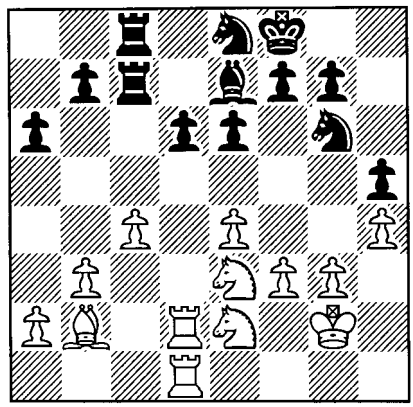
18...♖ec8 19 ♖f2 ♔f8 20 ♖fd2 h5

Perhaps 20...g5 is a better way to start.

21 h4!

Fixing a hole on g5.

21...♘e5 22 ♘ce2 ♘g6 23 ♘c2 ♘e8 24 ♘e3



Anand has placed all his pieces on perfect squares while Black's knights look rather clumsily placed. White already has a clear advantage.

24...b5

True Carlsen has managed to break with ...b5, but it lacks punch because c4 is secure.

25 f4!

This move could also have been played on the previous couple of moves. Anand takes away the e5-square from Black and is ready to push Carlsen off the board.

25...♔g8 26 f5 ♘f8

26...♘e5 27 fxe6 fxe6 28 ♘d4 bxc4 29 ♘xe6 ♖c6 30 ♘d5 displays the enormous power of the white cavalry.

27 ♘f4 g6 28 fxe6

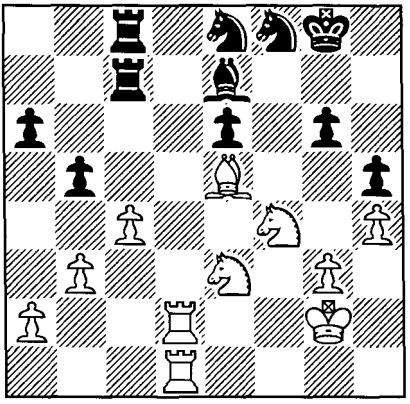
It's a shame to take the pressure off Black, who, you feel, is close to coming apart at the seams. However it's difficult to

put further pressure on Black's camp.

28...fxe6 29 e5 dxe5

Understandably Carlsen didn't feel like playing the endgame that arises after 29...bxc4 30 exd6 ♘xd6 31 ♗e5! c3 32 ♗xd6 ♖d7 (32...cxd2 33 ♗xc7 ♖xc7 34 ♖xd2 is also better for White, but perhaps the lesser evil) 33 ♗xe7 ♖xd2+ 34 ♖xd2 cxd2 35 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 36 ♔f2 when the two knights should outgun the rook.

30 ♗xe5



So Anand has transformed his bind into a positional advantage due to the weak e6- and g6-pawns. Most players would collapse here, but Carlsen does very well to stay in the game, albeit by his fingertips.

30...♖c6 31 ♔f3

31 ♘d3!? would prevent Black's plan.

31...♗f6 32 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 33 ♖d8 ♖xd8 34 ♖xd8 ♔f7 35 ♖b8

Going behind the other pawn with 35 ♖a8 is perhaps stronger, with the subtle idea of 35...♔e7 36 c5!, with a position similar to the game.

35...♘8d7 36 ♖b7 ♖b6?!

The rook should have stayed in front of the c-pawn. Maybe Black's best hope was 36...♔e8!? 37 ♘xg6 e5, attempting to find some counterplay.

37 ♖a7 ♖d6 38 c5! ♖c6 39 b4

Now Black is simply lost as the c5-pawn should be too difficult to stop. However, in rapid chess the tricky Norwegian proves too hard to put down.

39...e5 40 ♘fd5 ♔f8 41 a3

41 ♘c7! ♘b8 42 ♘ed5 would have picked up material.

41...♔e8 42 ♘xf6+

Again 42 ♘c7+ was very strong, as 42...♔d8 43 ♘xa6 ♔c8 44 a4! bxa4 45 b5 is hopeless.

42...♘xf6 43 ♖g7 e4+ 44 ♔e2 a5 45 ♖xg6 ♔f7 46 ♖g5 axb4 47 axb4 ♖a6 48 c6?

The c5-pawn was a major asset so shouldn't have been traded so lightly. The exchange of pawns also brings Black closer to the draw. Instead the accurate sequence 48 ♖e5! ♖a2+ 49 ♔e1 ♖a1+ 50 ♔d2 ♖a2+ 51 ♔c1 ♖a3 52 ♘f5 would have left Black dropping a further pawn as he cannot hold on to e4 and stop the c-pawn progressing.

48...♖xc6 49 ♖xb5 ♖c1 50 ♖c5 ♖b1 51 b5 ♖b3 52 ♘c4 ♔e6 53 b6 ♘d5 54 ♖c6+ ♔e7 55 ♖c5 ♔e6 56 ♖c6+ ½-½

I presume Anand was very short on time here, else surely he would have continued trying to convert his extra pawn.

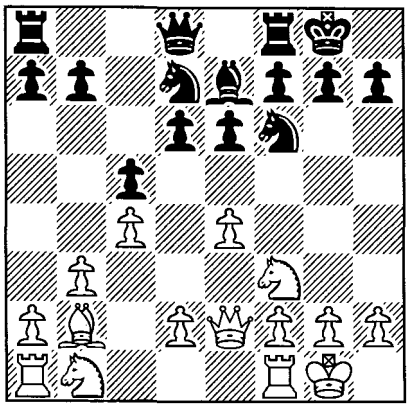
Game 20
L.Yudasin-A.Shirov
European Club Cup, Ljubljana 1995

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 5 0-0 ♘gf6 6 ♕e2 e6

6...e5 has been tried immediately, but seems illogical. That is because it doesn't prevent White from opening up the position with c2-c3 and d2-d4 after which Black will have a weak pawn on d6. It also gives up control of d5 without obtaining the corresponding d4-square. L.Orak-J.Zamostni,

Sibenik 2009, saw 7 c3 ♗e7 8 d4 0-0 9 ♖d1 (or 9 dxe5 dxe5, as in M.Bus-S.Zhukhovitsky, Krasnodar 1991, when 10 c4!? looks interesting as Black's knights are so far from d4) 9...♕b8 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♗g5 (again 11 c4!? should be considered) 11...♖e8 12 ♘a3 (12 ♗xf6! ♘xf6 13 c4 and the minor piece exchange favours White, as the e7-bishop is trapped behind its own pawns and can do nothing about the critical d5-square) 12...h6 13 ♗h4 ♘f8 14 ♘c4 ♘g6 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 ♖d7 ♖e7 17 ♖ad1 ♕e8 18 ♕d2 ♔h7 19 g3 ♖c8 20 h4 b6 21 h5 ♘f8 22 ♖d5 ♖a8 23 b3 by when Black was completely dominated.

7 b3 ♗e7 8 ♗b2 0-0 9 c4



9...e5

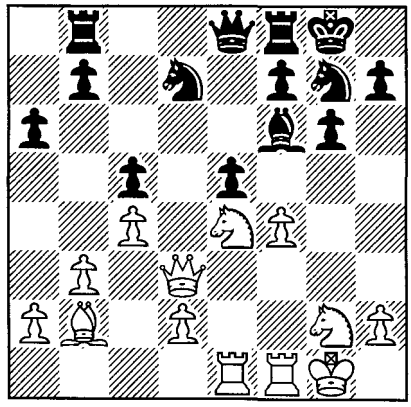
Here we see one of the alternatives open to Black if White tries the 7 b3 move order. Black slows the game right down and it becomes a battle of outposts. White is somewhat nearer d5 than Black is d4 so he should have something of an edge, whilst we would of course love a situation in which we're left with our knight on d5 against that e7-bishop after exchanging on d4.

10 ♘c3 ♘e8

Shirov immediately reroutes his knight around to e6 to peer at d4 and at the same time clears the f-file for a potential ...f5 break. Other moves have also been tried.

a) 10...g6 was tried in another heavy duty clash between Gata Kamsky and Boris Alterman at Tilburg 1993: 11 a3!? ♘h5 12 g3 ♘g7 13 b4 b6 14 ♘d5 f5 15 exf5 ♘xf5 when White had the strong shot 16 d4! cxd4 (16...♘xd4 17 ♗xd4 cxd4 18 ♘xd4! is terrible for Black with all the light-square holes) 17 g4!, regaining the pawn with a powerful bind on d5 and e4.

b) 10...♘h5 doesn't make so much sense. 11 g3 is a move White wants to play anyway, as you'll see in the game continuation, while the benefits of ...g6 aren't so clear: 11...g6 12 ♘e1 ♕e8 (ambitiously preparing ...f7-f5 as in a King's Indian but here such aggression is out of place) 13 ♘g2 a6 (13...f5 14 exf5 gxf5 15 ♖ae1 ♕g6 16 f4 is the typical reply to ...f5 when Black is the one left with the more draughty king) 14 ♖ae1 ♖b8 15 ♕d3 ♘g7 16 f4 exf4 17 gxf4 (17 ♘xf4 could also be considered) 17...♗f6 18 e5! dxe5 19 ♘e4 and White had a powerful initiative which the experienced Dutch Grandmaster couldn't fight off.



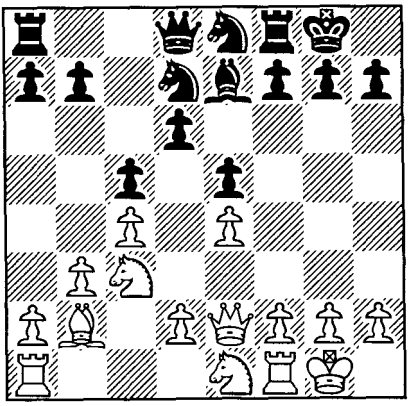
D.Reinderman-J.Van der Wiel, Wijk aan Zee 2000, concluded 19...♗d8 20 fxe5 ♘e6 21 ♔h1 (the direct 21 ♘e3 would also have left Black with severe problems: for in-

stance, 21...♕e7 22 ♖f6! ♘d4 23 ♘d5! ♕xe5 24 ♖d6 f5 25 ♗xd4 ♕xd4+ 26 ♕xd4 cxd4 27 ♖xd7 fxe4 28 ♖xe4 ♗f6 29 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 30 ♖ee7 leaving Black with a lost ending) 21...b5 22 ♕e3! bxc4 23 ♕h6 cxb3 24 ♘f6+ ♘xf6 25 exf6 ♖b7 26 ♖f3 and 1-0 as there's no defence to 27 ♖h3.

c) 10...♘b8 is the fastest route to d4. Rublevsky, perhaps the most experienced ♗b5+ player of them all, tried the unusual 11 d3 ♘c6 12 ♘d2!?, ceding d4 for the moment but preparing to play down the f-file. After 12...♘d4 13 ♕d1 a6 14 f4 exf4 15 ♖xf4 b5 16 ♖f1 ♖b8 17 ♘f3 ♘e6 18 ♕d2 ♖b7 19 ♖ae1 ♘g4 20 ♘d5 White's opening experiment had clearly been a success in S.Rublevsky-N.Rashkovsky, Elista 1994.

d) 10...♖e8 was tried in a more recent game, rerouting the knight to e6 where it both looks at the outpost on d4 and helps prevent f2-f4. G.Hernandez-F.Castella Garcia, Cullera 2004, saw 11 ♘e1 ♘f8 and here White could follow Rublevsky's example with 12 ♘d3 (12 f4!? also looks interesting) 12...♘e6 13 f4 ♘d4 14 ♕f2 exf4 15 ♘xf4 ♘g4 16 ♕g3 ♘e5 17 ♘cd5 when White's play on the kingside and more secure outpost promise him good chances.

11 ♘e1



Yudasin follows suit.

11...♘c7 12 ♘c2 ♗g5

Dissuading White from breaking with f2-f4. The problem here is that Black doesn't want to move his knight from c7 until White plays ♘c2-e3 himself.

12...♗f6 has also been tried: 13 ♘e3 ♘e6 14 g3 g6 was G.Hernandez-H.Mecking, Mallorca Olympiad 2004, and here I would jump into d5 immediately with 15 ♘cd5 ♗g7 16 d3 when White can react to 16...♘d4 with 17 ♗xd4 cxd4 18 ♘c2 ♘b6 19 ♘cb4, retaining an advantage thanks to the strong knight on d5.

Instead 12...♘e6 13 ♘d5 ♘f6 14 ♘ce3 ♘xd5 15 ♘xd5 ♗g5 16 g3 ♘c7 17 ♘e3 ♗xe3 18 dxe3 doesn't leave White with a huge advantage, but the pressure down the d-file will be awkward and White can increase the pressure with timely f2-f4 and b3-b4 breaks.

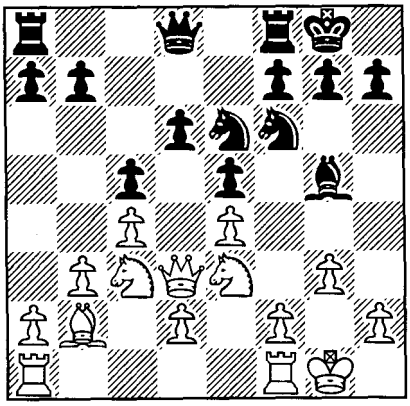
13 ♘e3 ♘f6

13...♗xe3 14 dxe3! would lose the d4 outpost and leave d6 as a chronic weakness.

14 g3

Both preventing a knight jump into f4 and also preparing f2-f4, opening up the diagonal for the bishop on b2 and some lines towards Black's king.

14...♘e6 15 ♕d3

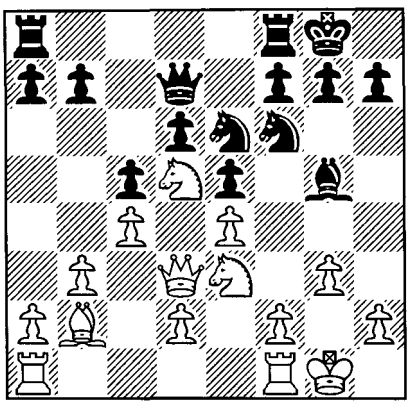


15...♕d7?!

This is rather an aimless move and it's clear Shirov isn't sure how to proceed.

15...♔h8!? is Chekhov's suggestion, but after 16 ♘cd5 ♘xd5, instead of his 17 cxd5, keeping the outpost with 17 ♘xd5 makes much more sense when 17...♘c7 18 f4 ♘xd5 19 ♕xd5 exf4 20 gxf4 ♗f6 21 e5 dxe5 22 fxe5 ♗g5 23 ♖f2 would keep pressure on Black's position.

16 ♘cd5



16...♗xe3?!

Shirov chooses the worst time to take on e3. Black should probably sit tight and wait, although f2-f4 is a dangerous-looking threat:

a) 16...♘xd5 17 ♘xd5 ♘d4 18 f4 ♗h6 19 ♗xd4 cxd4 20 a4! is pretty terrible for Black as the knight completely dominates the bishop.

b) 16...♖ae8 17 f4 exf4 18 gxf4 ♘xd5 (18...♗h4 19 ♘f5 would pick up the stranded bishop) 19 ♘xd5 ♗d8 20 f5 ♘c7 still looks extremely unpleasant for Black so it's clear that his opening hasn't been a success. Continuing here with 21 ♖f3 would definitely cause Black's position to creak.

17 ♘xf6+ gxf6 18 fxe3

Now Black will be completely tied down on the kingside and in fact Chekhov claims that White already has a decisive advantage.

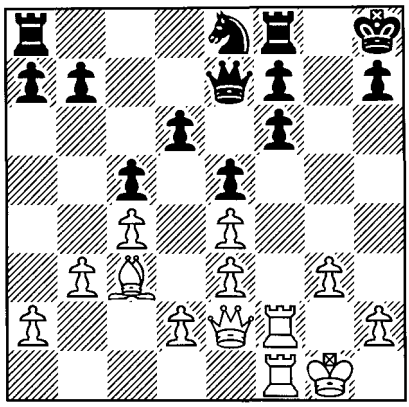
18...♕e7 19 ♖f2 ♘c7 20 ♖af1 ♘e8

The poor knight has been forced to run back to e8 to cover the f6-pawn.

21 ♕e2

The immediate 21 ♗c3 could also be considered, preparing b3-b4.

21...♔h8 22 ♗c3!



Yudasin, seeing that Black is totally tied down on the kingside, decides it's time to open a second flank.

22...♖g8

22...a5 would only temporarily delay the opening of the queenside. It might appear that after 23 a3 the subsequent opening of the a-file will favour Black as his rook is already on a8, but I'm not so sure. The f8-rook will struggle to be part of the game and so it is likely White will be able to take over the a-file and penetrate Black's position.

23 b4

Of course.

23...b6

Or 23...cxb4 24 ♗xb4 ♖c8 25 d3 followed by a transfer of pieces to the b-file and Black won't be able to keep White's major forces out.

24 bxc5 bxc5

24...dxc5 is possible, but 25 a4 a5 (oth-

erwise White would be able to open up the position anyway) 26 ♖b1 ♕c7 27 d4!? leaves Black in an awkward situation of defending two big weaknesses.

25 ♖b1

Yudasin finds the back door into Black's position.

25...♖g6 26 ♕d3!?

Recentralizing the queen. 26 d3 followed by either ♕b2-b7 or ♕f1 and ♖b2-b7 was the alternative plan.

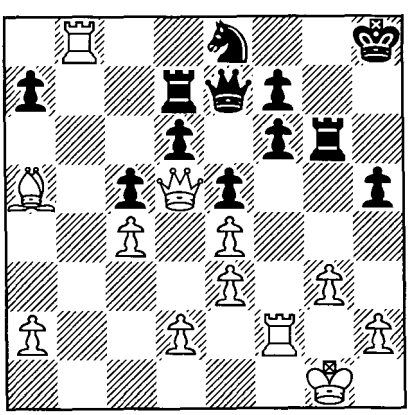
26...h5

26...♕e6 is the computer's suggestion, but I really doubt that Black can hold on following the queen exchange: 27 ♕d5 ♕xd5 28 exd5 and there's no way to prevent White taking the seventh rank.

27 ♕d5 ♖d8

If 27...♖c8 28 ♖b7 ♘c7 (28...♖c7 29 ♖b8 would be similar to the game) 29 ♕c6 h4 30 ♖f3 ♔g7 31 ♗a5 ♕e8 32 ♕xe8 ♘xe8 33 ♖xa7 and it's only a matter of time before the a-pawn forces a big material concession from Black.

28 ♗a5 ♖d7 29 ♖b8!

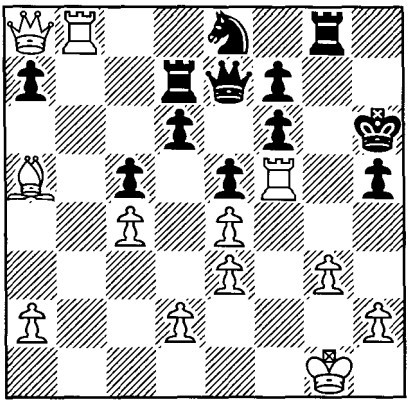


Taking the back rank and suddenly the contest is all over.

29...♖g8

29...h4 30 ♕a8 ♖g8 31 ♗d8 ♕e6 32 ♗xf6+ ♘xf6 33 ♖xf6 ♕xf6 34 ♖xg8+ ♔h7 is a pretty forced line given by Chekhov when I think the simplest win is 35 ♔g2 followed by ♖g8-g4.

30 ♕a8 ♔h7 31 ♖f5 ♔h6



32 ♔f2

Leaving Black in a strangling grip, although 32 ♗d8! ♕e6 33 ♗xf6 picked up material.

32...♕e6 33 h3 ♖e7 34 ♗d8

Yudasin was evidently enjoying himself, but finally decides to take the material on offer.

34...♖d7 35 ♗xf6 ♘c7 36 ♖xg8! ♘xa8 37 g4 hxg4 38 ♖xg4 1-0

A pretty finish. It's not often you see Shirov forced to play without a scrap of counterplay.

Game 21
J.Timman-S.Giardelli
Mar del Plata 1982

1 ♘f3 c5 2 e4 e6 3 b3 d6 4 ♗b2 ♘f6 5 ♗b5+ ♗d7 6 ♗xd7+ ♘bxd7 7 ♕e2 ♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 c4

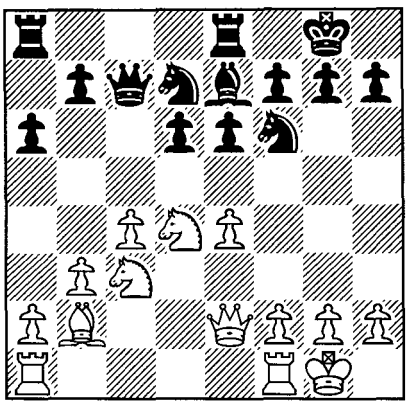
So we have reached the normal position via a slightly weird move order, and it's useful to see that you can arrive at this position via different routes.

9...♖e8

Otherwise:

a) 9...♖c8 10 d4 cxd4 11 ♘xd4 a6 is again simply a transposition to Malakhov-Kozul and Anand-Carlsen.

b) 9...♕c7 is another common try, leading after 10 d4 cxd4 11 ♘xd4 a6 12 ♘c3 ♖fe8 to a choice for White:



b1) 13 ♔h1 is an inaccurate move order as Black can strike out with 13...d5! 14 cxd5 exd5 15 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 16 exd5 ♗a3 17 ♕d2 ♗xb2 18 ♕xb2 ♕e5 and the game was agreed drawn in S.Belkhodja-G.Ligterink, Amsterdam 1987.

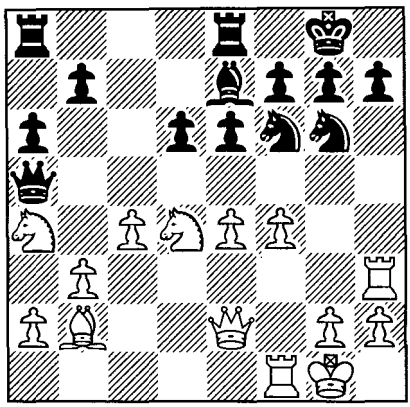
b2) 13 f4 is another possibility and was the choice of the legendary Tal, but this allows 13...b5! 14 cxb5 ♕a7 with good queenside play. Again we should be careful not to allow either of these two breaks.

b3) Thus 13 ♖ad1 should be played:

b31) 13...♗f8 14 f4 (14 ♔h1 would not be a good option as Black could play 14...d5!) 14...e5 15 ♘f5 b5 16 cxb5 axb5 was messy in M.Ulibin-V.Ruban, Santa Clara 1991, although 17 ♔h1! would have left White on top.

b32) 13...d5?! can no longer be advised for Black as the 14 cxd5 exd5 15 ♘f5! dxe4 of A.Lickleder-A.Hellmayr, German League 2003, allows 16 ♘d5! ♘xd5 17 ♕g4! ♗f6 18 ♖xd5 ♗xb2 19 ♘h6+ ♔h8 20 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 21 ♖xd7 ♕c6 22 ♘d6, leaving White with a strong initiative.

b33) 13...♕c5 14 ♖d3 ♘e5 15 ♘a4 ♕a5 16 ♖h3 ♘g6 17 f4 was a very aggressive attempt in V.Akopian-M.Illescas Cordoba, Ubeda 1997.



Black was obliged to hit back in the centre with 17...e5, but after 18 ♘f5! ♘xf4 19 ♖xf4 (White must get rid of that knight to proceed with the attack and the bishop on b2 now joins the fray) 19...exf4 20 ♗c3 ♕d8 21 ♘xg7! ♔xg7 22 ♕g4+ ♔h8 23 ♕f5 ♔g8 the most accurate path to the win was with 24 ♕xf4! as if Black plays 24...b5, then 25 ♕g5+ ♔h8 26 ♕h6 mates now that there's no f-pawn controlling g3.

10 ♘c3

To prevent the game continuation it's possible to start with 10 d4, which will probably transpose to lines already covered.

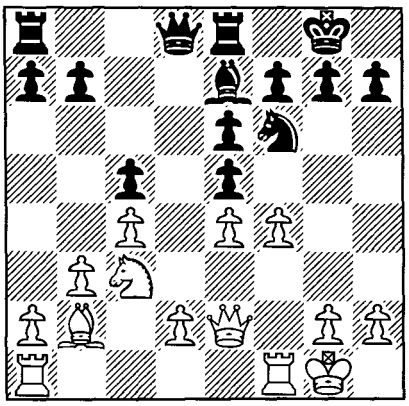
10...♘e5

The only independent option. Black prevents us opening the centre with d2-d4, but at the same time loses the possibility of a ...d6-d5 break. This ...♘e5 idea is quite common in the ♗b5+ lines and thus we should always be ready for it.

Instead 10...a6 11 d4 cxd4 12 ♘xd4 would transpose to Anand-Carlsen, while

10...e5 transposes to note 'd' to Black's 10th move in Yudasin-Shirov.

11 ♘xe5 dxe5 12 f4!



The most aggressive way of dealing with Black's idea. Timman opens up the f-file for his rooks and the long diagonal for his bishop.

12...exf4

This is too tame.

Black should play 12...♕d4+ to try and cause some problems with White's coordination: 13 ♖f2 (13 ♔h1 ♖ed8 14 fxe5 ♕xe5 15 ♖ae1 also looks to favour White slightly) 13...exf4 14 ♖b1 (defending the bishop and threatening to trap the queen; 14 e5 is met by the annoying 14...f3!) 14...♕e5 (14...♕d8 15 e5 ♘d7 16 ♖xf4 is basically the same as the game) 15 ♘d5 ♕g5 16 ♘c7 e5 17 ♖f3 leaves Black with some compensation for the exchange, but White should still be a little better.

13 e5!

Gaining space and forcing Black backwards.

13...♘d7

13...♕d4+ is too late now as 14 ♔h1 ♘d7 15 ♘a4 embarrasses the black queen.

14 ♖xf4 ♗g5?!

Giardelli's bid for activity with his bishop is misguided, as he has left the d6-square weak. The alternatives were:

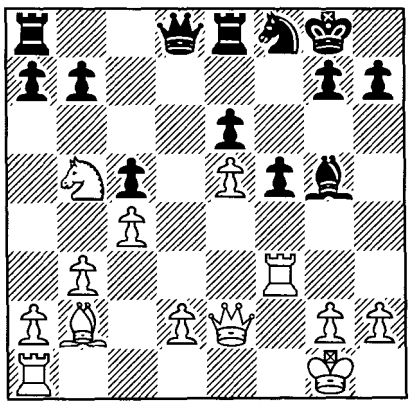
a) 14...f5 immediately is probably Black's best, although 15 exf6 ♗xf6 16 ♖af1 must favour White thanks to the weak e6-pawn. Note that here 16...e5? would be a bad positional error as it would cede the d5-square and block in Black's own bishop and knight.

b) If Black goes passive a typical sequence could run 14...♕c7 15 ♘b5 ♕c6 16 ♕h5 (16 ♕f3!? ♕xf3 17 ♖xf3 would leave Black with continued problems on the f-file and with the d6-square) 16...♖f8 17 ♖e1 a6 18 ♘d6 ♗xd6 (18...f5 19 ♖f3 ♗xd6 20 exd6 ♕xd6 21 ♖h3 also leaves White with a dangerous initiative) 19 ♖h4 h6 20 exd6 ♕xd6 21 ♖g4 (21 ♗xg7 ♕xd2! isn't clear) 21...f6 22 ♕xh6 ♖f7 23 ♗c3 and White's attack is ongoing.

15 ♖f3 f5 16 ♘b5!

Eyeing up the d6-square and exploiting Black's mistake on move 14. This is stronger than 16 exf6 ♗xf6 which would more or less transpose to 14...f5.

16...♘f8



17 d4!

It makes sense to get rid of the backward pawn, while at the same time Timman opens up the d-file for his rooks to penetrate into Black's position.

17...cxd4 18 ♗xd4 ♗e7 19 ♖d1 a6 20 ♘d6!

♗xd6 21 exd6

Timman correctly transforms one advantage, the outpost for the knight on d6, into another, the open long diagonal for the uncontested dark-squared bishop. The advanced pawn is also going to be deeply troubling to Black who at this stage wishes he could retreat that pawn on f5 to f6.

21...e5?!

Giardelli tries desperate measures to get rid of the bishop, but the pin doesn't trouble White in the least.

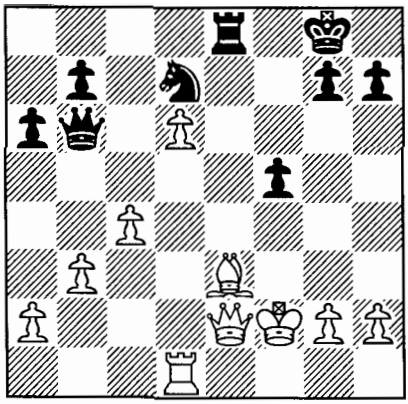
21...♕xd6 22 ♗xg7 looks extremely dangerous for Black, but perhaps it had to be tried, since after 22...♕b6+ 23 ♗d4 ♕c7 there's no immediate breakthrough, although of course White has a clear advantage.

However, 21...♕d7 22 c5 is hopeless for Black as he won't be able to prevent White's queenside pawns sweeping up the board.

22 ♗xe5 ♘d7 23 ♖e3 ♕b6 24 ♗d4

Getting out of the pin immediately but Black can renew it. The calm 24 ♔f1! was best and after 24...♖e6 25 ♗f4 the position is hopeless for Black.

24...♖xe3 25 ♗xe3 ♖e8 26 ♔f2



26...♘c5?

This loses on the spot. Perhaps time trouble had started affecting the players or else Giardelli was so disillusioned with his position he didn't want to sit there any longer.

26...♕c6 was objectively better, although Black is hardly going to survive the endgame after 27 ♕f3.

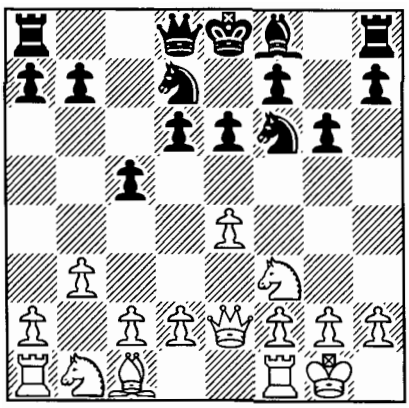
27 ♕f3

27 d7! was the most accurate win: 27...♖d8 28 ♔f1! and the threat of ♕e8+ cannot be prevented, as shown by 28...♔f7 29 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 30 ♕h5+ ♔f8 31 ♖e1!,

27...♖e5 28 d7 ♕d8 29 ♗xc5 1-0

Game 22
V.Kramnik-B.Gelfand
1st matchgame, Sakthi 1994

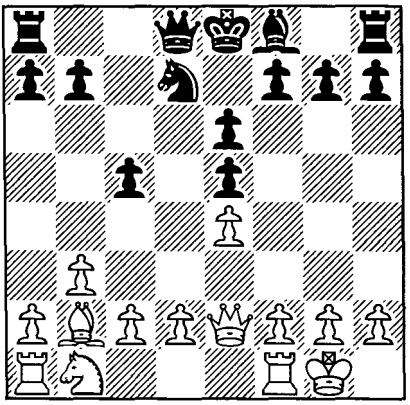
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 5 0-0 ♘gf6 6 ♕e2 e6 7 b3 g6!?



This interesting idea was introduced by the world-class Israeli Boris Gelfand and then repeated by Garry Kasparov. I have already said that the dark-squared bishop is best placed on g7 against our Maroczy approach. We'll see Black playing 6...g6 in the next game, but there we can react with 7 c3 and d4 to create a pawn centre against which the bishop isn't so useful on g7. Here we have already played b2-b3 so that plan

would be a little clumsy, although it's still possible. Instead we should try to exploit the fact that Black has weakened the defence of his d6-pawn.

Recently, Mr ♗b5 himself, Sergey Rublevsky, faced 7...♘e5!? which is an idea we always have to be on the alert for. In S.Rublevsky-D.Mikrut, Warsaw (rapid), he continued 8 ♘xe5 dxe5 9 ♗b2 ♘d7 (9...♗d6 10 f4! ♘d7 11 f5 exf5 12 ♖xf5 0-0 13 ♘a3 followed by 14 ♘c4 leaves White with the more pleasant game due to his greater space, superior minor pieces and kingside potential).



Here I believe we should opt for 10 ♘a3 when it isn't so easy for Black to complete his development and defend the e5-pawn:

a) 10...♗e7 was played in the game, but here 11 ♘c4 leaves Black with no good way to defend the pawn: 11...♗f6 (otherwise, 11...♕c7 12 ♕h5 g6 13 ♗xe5! picks up a pawn, 11...♕b8 would hold on to the pawn temporarily, but after 12 ♕h5! g6 13 ♕h6 ♗f8 14 ♕g5 ♗g7 15 f4 the e5-pawn drops, and 11...f6 12 ♕g4 ♔f7 is hardly awe-inspiring; Black has a vulnerable king and the e6-pawn will be a long term weakness for him) 12 ♘d6+ ♔e7 13 ♘c4! and with f2-f4 coming next move, White has too strong an initiative.

b) 10...♗d6 11 ♘c4 ♗c7 12 a4 0-0 13 a5 followed by ♖fb1, ♗c3 and b3-b4 with a pleasant queenside initiative.

c) 10...♕b8 11 ♘c4 b5 12 ♘e3 ♗e7 13 a4 and Black will regret the weakening of his queenside.

8 d4

White has also tried:

a) 8 ♗b2 has been more common, but we intend to develop the bishop to a3.

b) 8 c3!? has been seen, intending to create a pawn centre: for example, 8...♗g7 9 d4 0-0 10 ♘bd2 ♕c7 11 ♗b2 ♖fc8 12 ♖fe1 a6 13 e5!? ♘e8 14 h4 and White had promising kingside chances in S.Rublevsky-V.Neverov, St Petersburg 1995 .

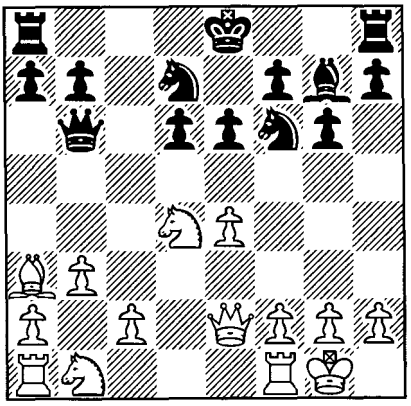
8...cxd4

8...♗g7 has also been tried when I think we should try 9 e5!? ♘d5 10 ♗g5 ♕b6 (10...♕c7?! 11 c4 ♘b4 12 ♘c3! gives White a great position) 11 ♘bd2 dxe5 12 dxe5 h6 13 ♘c4 ♕a6 14 ♗d2 with an edge thanks to our more active minor pieces.

9 ♘xd4 ♗g7 10 ♗a3!

Immediately hitting the vulnerable pawn. Of course such a course of action is dangerous with the bishop on g7 looking down the long diagonal, but Kramnik has it all under control.

10...♕b6



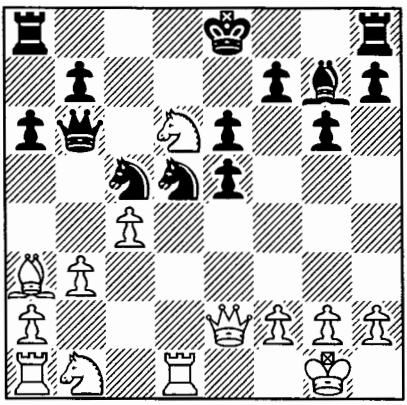
Due to the following note, perhaps Black should instead try 10...a6. The pawn on d6 is taboo so White should probably try 11 ♖d1 (not 11 ♗xd6? ♕b6, but 11 ♘d2!? is another try although I couldn't find an advantage after it) 11...♕c7 12 c4 ♘c5 13 ♘c3 0-0 14 ♖ac1 and his pieces coordinate slightly better than in the final position in the main game. I can't say that White has a clear advantage here, but nevertheless I'd be happy to take White. We have our customary space advantage and can start manoeuvring to target the d6-pawn. Meanwhile Black has his solid point, but it's not so easy for him to improve his position.

11 ♘c3!?

The kind of move it's hard to resist when you see the knight can't be taken but not the strongest.

Instead 11 ♘b5! is critical, with an extremely complicated position in prospect:

a) 11...♘c5 12 e5! looks very promising for White: 12...dxe5 (12...♘fe4 13 ♘d2 d5 14 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 15 ♘d6+ ♘xd6 16 ♗xd6 ♗f8 17 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 18 ♕f3! and despite the simplification, Black still struggles to get his king to safety and complete his development) 13 ♖d1! ♘d5 (13...0-0 14 ♖d6 wins the house) 14 c4 a6 (14...♘f4 15 ♕e3 is also horrible) 15 ♘d6+!



15...♕xd6 16 cxd5 leaves Black a pawn up and he can pick up a second, but the pins are extremely damaging:

a1) 16...e4 17 ♘d2! ♗xa1 18 ♘xe4 and we will swiftly recover our sacrificed material with interest. It's impossible to cover all the lines, but one illustrative continuation runs 18...♕e5 19 ♗xc5 0-0-0 20 f4 ♕b2 21 ♕e1 ♖xd5 22 ♖b1 ♕g7 23 ♖xa1 f5 24 ♗d6 fxe4 25 ♖c1+ ♔d8 26 ♗e5 ♖xe5 27 ♕c3 ♕d7 28 ♕xe5 and Black is no longer any material up while still suffering from an extremely exposed king.

a2) 16...exd5 17 ♘c3 and Black must return both pawns to get his king to safety: 17...b6 18 ♖xd5 ♕c7 19 ♗xc5 bxc5 20 ♕c4 0-0 21 ♖xc5 ♕b6 22 ♘d5 ♕b7 23 ♖d1 and White dominates the board.

a3) 16...b6, simply trying to castle, could be best, although 17 ♘c3 0-0 18 ♘e4 ♕d7 19 dxe6 ♕xe6 20 ♖d6 ♕f5 21 ♗xc5 bxc5 22 ♖ad1 leaves White on top.

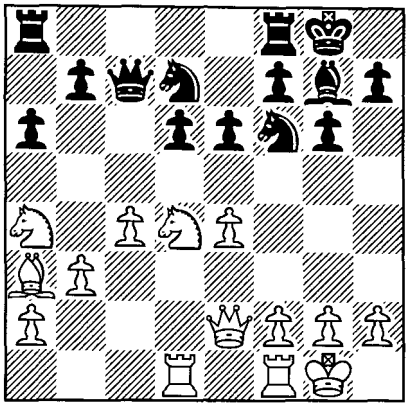
b) 11...0-0 12 ♘xd6 ♘xe4 13 ♘xe4 ♗xa1 14 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 15 c3 is better for White as the bishop struggles to exit.

c) 11...♘xe4 12 ♘d2! (12 ♕xe4? ♗xa1?? 13 ♘xd6+ ♔d8 14 ♘xf7+ is given by Psakhis, but he completely forgets about 12...♕xb5!) 12...♘df6 (12...♘xd2? 13 ♘xd6+ and 12...♗xa1?! 13 ♘xe4 are both losing) 13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♕xe4 ♕xb5 15 ♖ad1 0-0 16 ♗xd6 ♖fd8 17 c4 and White has a concrete advantage with the bishop on d6 dominating proceedings. Our plan is to start advancing the queenside pawns to create a passed pawn.

11...a6 12 ♖ad1 0-0 13 ♘a4 ♕c7 14 c4 ½-½

A draw was agreed at this point, although I believe White still has good chances by pressuring d6. That said, Black has only one weakness and Kramnik no doubt respected Gelfand's technique. Instead of 11 ♘c3, 11 ♘b5 is certainly the

critical test and from my analysis, looks very strong.



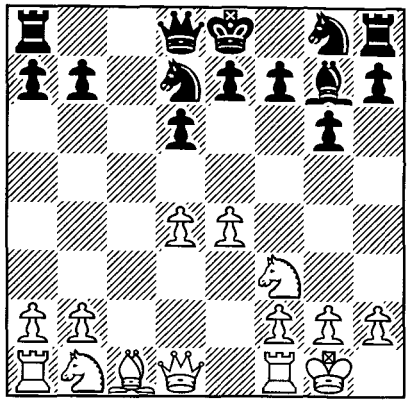
Game 23
V.Bhat-Bu Xiangzhi
Seattle 2001

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 5 0-0 ♘gf6

5...g6 6 c3 doesn't have much significant difference from the game continuation. Black can try developing his knight instead to e7, but then White can reach a very comfortable position with 6...♗g7 (6...♘gf6 7 ♕e2 transposes to the game) 7 d4:

a) 7...♕c7 8 ♖e1 (I think here the rook move is more accurate) 8...a6 9 ♗f4 e5 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♗h4 g5 13 ♗g3 ♘e7 14 c4 0-0 15 ♘c3 ♖fe8 16 h4 g4 17 ♘h2 h5 18 f3 left White taking over in M.Arribas Robaina-T.Battsetseg, Yerevan 1996, where Black's attempt at counterplay with 18...f5 failed to 19 ♘d5 ♘xd5 20 ♕xd5+ ♔f8 21 exf5 and White had a decisive advantage.

b) 7...cxd4 8 cxd4 gives us our perfect centre, but is the sort of dream position which might be reached on occasion at club level:



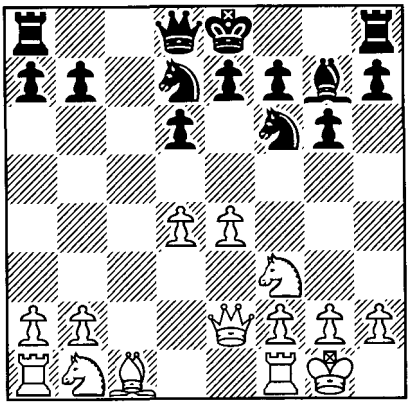
b1) 8...e5 9 ♘c3 a6 10 ♗g5 f6 11 ♗e3 ♘h6 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♕b3 b5 14 ♖ad1 ♖b8 15 ♖d6 ♘f7 16 ♖e6+ ♔f8 17 ♖xa6 ♖b7 18 ♘xb5 ♔g8 19 ♕d5 and 1-0 was total demolition in B.Golubovic-G.Hagege, Paris 1998.

b2) 8...e6 and here 9 ♗f4 doesn't seem to have been played before, but looks strong. White provokes 9...e5 after which 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♗g3 ♘e7 12 ♘c3 0-0 13 ♕b3 ♕c7 14 ♖ac1 leaves him with a very pleasant position.

6 ♕e2 g6 7 c3 ♗g7 8 d4 cxd4

8...0-0 has also been tried a few times. It makes sense for Black not to exchange so that White doesn't have the c3-square for his knight. Unfortunately (for Black) this allows 9 e5! dxe5 (9...♘e8 10 e6 ♘df6 11 exf7+ ♖xf7 12 ♘g5 cxd4 13 ♕e6 and 1-0 in E.Rozentalis-K.Wisniowska, Warsaw 2007, shouldn't really be repeated) 10 dxe5 ♘g4 11 ♗f4 ♕b6 12 h3! (well calculated; Black can temporarily win material but the queen becomes trapped in the corner) 12...♘gxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♕xe5 ♕xb2 16 ♕d5 b5 17 ♕b3 ♕xa1 18 ♘d2 c4 19 ♕c2. Perhaps if Black had a passed pawn it would be different, but here White's queen and knight work better than Black's rooks and two pawns, G.Kaidanov-D.Gurevich, Lexington 1995.

9 cxd4



9...e5

Bu Xiangzhi takes immediate steps to fight back in the centre, but Black is now left with rather a miserable position.

9...0-0 has also been tried, but White should have a comfortable advantage thanks to his centre: for example, 10 ♘c3 ♘b6 was G.Meier-A.Adly, Heraklion 2002, and here White could have taken concrete steps with 11 a4 ♖c8 12 ♗g5 h6 13 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 ♖fc1 a6 15 a5 ♘d7 16 e5 ♗g7 17 e6 ♘f6 18 ♖e1, with a wonderful position.

10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♖d1 ♕b8

Various queen moves have been tried here but none are very successful:

a) 11...♕a5 12 ♗d2 and then:

a1) 12...♕b6 was seen in S.Bruchmann-J.Schwarzenberg, Bielefeld 2005, and here I'd go for 13 ♘c3 0-0 14 ♗e3 ♕e6 15 ♘b5 ♕a6 16 a4 when Black's position is not enviable.

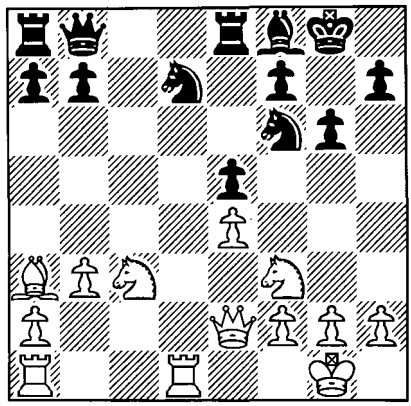
a2) 12...♕a6 is probably a better move, although defending the endgame after 13 ♕xa6 bxa6 14 ♘c3 ♘c5 15 ♘g5 ♖c8 16 ♗e3 h6 17 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 18 ♘f3 is a thankless task.

b) 11...♕e7 12 b3 0-0 13 ♗a3 ♘c5 14 ♘c3 ♖fd8 15 ♘a4 b6 (M.Maki Uuro-N.Alfred, Budapest 2000) 16 ♖ac1 ♖xd1+ 17 ♖xd1 ♕c7 18 ♗xc5 bxc5 19 g3 would have left Black with great positional problems. White's plan is to exchange a pair of knights on d5 followed by pressuring the e5- and c5-pawns. Black will be lucky to keep one of them.

12 b3

Targeting the d6-square.

12...0-0 13 ♗a3 ♖e8 14 ♘c3 ♗f8



15 ♗b2!?

An interesting choice. Bhat decides to keep the bishops on the board to put pressure on the e5-pawn. 15 ♗xf8 ♘xf8 16 ♖ac1 a6 17 ♘d5 ♘xd5 18 ♖xd5 f6 also looks good for White, but perhaps Black can hold on.

15...a5 16 ♖ac1

Black has a few problems with his position: the main one being the a8-rook, but the d5-square is also going to hurt. Bu Xiangzhi decides to develop the rook along the sixth rank, but there's no way to repair the d5-outpost.

16...♖a6 17 ♕b5

The immediate 17 ♘d5 also looks very promising and 17 g4!? h6 18 h4 ♘c5 19 g5 ♘h5 20 ♘d5 is an interesting idea, but doesn't seem very practical to me as Black may be able to conjure up some counterplay against our exposed king.

17...♗d6 18 ♘d5 ♘xd5 19 exd5!?

An unexpected capture. Bhat decides he wants a passed pawn and access to the e4-square for his knight. 19 ♕xd5 would have been more usual and after 19...♘f6 20 ♕d3 White still has a small advantage with the better-coordinated pieces and stronger bishop.

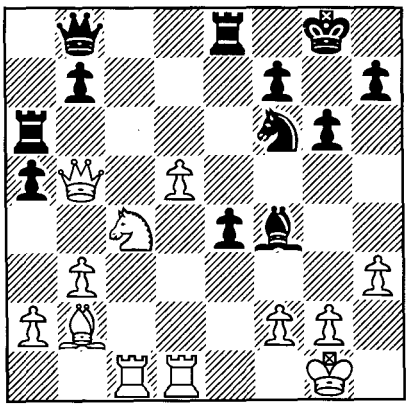
19...♘f6 20 ♘d2 e4!

Bu Xiangzhi exploits a tactical trick to improve the scope of his bishop and take the e4-square under his control.

21 h3

Due to the game continuation, I wonder if 21 g3 might be more accurate, controlling the f4-square. Black could try 21...e3 (21...♗e5 22 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 23 ♘c4 ♖h5 24 ♘e3 is terrible for Black as the d-pawn will prove simply too strong) 22 ♗xf6 exd2 23 ♖xd2 ♗f4 24 gxf4 ♖xf6, but 25 ♖d4 keeps everything under control. With just the major pieces left on the board, the d-pawn is more important than White's compromised kingside.

21...♗f4 22 ♘c4!?



Bhat continues coming up with unexpected moves! He surmises that in the battle for the dark squares, the bishop is more important than the rook.

22...e3

Bu declines the exchange and tries to seize the initiative himself. Grabbing the exchange must be critical, though: 22...♗xc1 23 ♖xc1 e3!? (deflecting the knight; after 23...♖d8 24 d6 the bishop and d6-pawn totally dominate the position) 24 ♘xe3 ♖d8 25 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 26 ♕xa5 and the knight and two pawns slightly outweigh the rook.

23 fxe3 ♗h2+ 24 ♔f1

24 ♔h1 looks rather risky, but after 24...♘e4 25 ♖c2 I don't see how Black gets any further with his attack and thus White's extra pawn should decide.

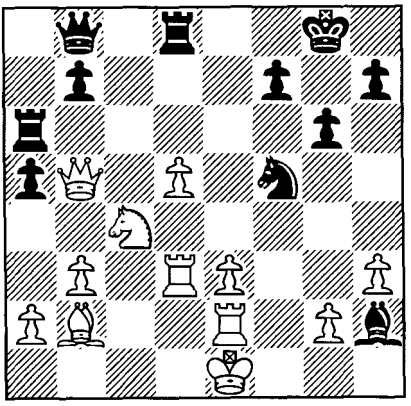
24...♘e4 25 ♖c2 ♘g3+

25...♖a8! is a surprising move, but looks like the best way to continue the attack. The idea is that the e8-rook is now defended so Black's queen is free to move. The most practical response looks to be 26 d6 ♘xd6 27 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 28 ♗d4 ♖e6 29 ♖dc1 ♗a3 30 ♖c8+ ♕xc8 31 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 32 ♕xb7 and I'd prefer White's queen, as Black still has to watch out for the safety of his king.

26 ♔e1 ♘f5 27 ♖e2

27 ♖d3 looks more accurate so that the king has an open path to the safety of the queenside: 27...♖d8 28 ♔d1, etc.

27...♖d8 28 ♖d3



28...♘g3?

The decisive mistake. I wonder if Black

just missed White's reply. 28...♗g3+ 29 ♔d1 ♘d6 30 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 would be a better bet, but White should simply be a pawn up by this point.

29 ♗e5!

Now the h2-bishop is completely offside.

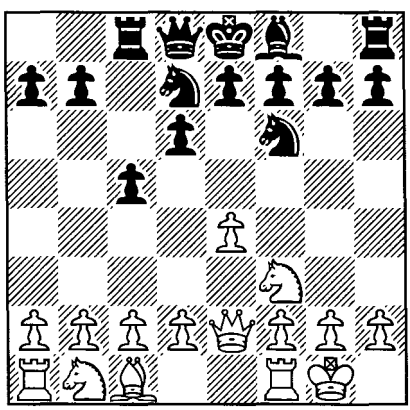
29...♕c8 30 ♖f2 ♖e8?!

And this just makes it easier.

31 d6! ♕e6 32 ♖f6 1-0

Game 24
V.Iordachescu-A.Timofeev
Moscow 2007

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 5 0-0 ♘gf6 6 ♕e2 ♖c8!?



This is a clever move which has been developed against our waiting strategy. Ideally we want Black to have committed to either...e6 or ...g6 before we choose how to proceed, so here Black tries a useful move and passes the buck back to us. Most of the players on the black side are quite high rated and this is because the idea is quite sophisticated. After considering the line for some time, I have decided we should go for the c2-c3 and d2-d4 structure here. This is because whilst it's still possible for Black to play ...e7-e6 and ...d6-d5, the move ...♖c8 forces him into a sideline where I think we can keep the advantage.

6...♕c7 is rather a worse version of the game, as Black rarely wants the queen on c7 while the rook often wants to be on c8. 7 c3 and then:

a) 7...g6 is illogical as we have already established that c3 and d4 works well against the fianchetto: 8 d4 ♗g7 9 e5!? dxe5 10 dxe5 ♘g4 11 e6 ♘de5? (11...fxe6 was better, although 12 ♕xe6 ♘ge5 13 ♘bd2 ♕b6 14 ♕b3 favours White with his better structure) 12 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 13 f4 ♘c6 14 exf7+ ♔f8 15 ♘d2 ♘d8 16 ♘e4 ♘xf7 17 ♘g5 ♘xg5 18 fxg5+ ♔e8 19 ♗f4 ♕c6 20 ♖ae1 ♗f8 21 ♗e5 ♖g8 22 ♕c4 e6 23 ♗d6 1-0, H.Westerinen-L.Marsa, Balaguer 2001.

b) 7...e6 8 d4 cxd4?! (8...♗e7 would make more sense of Black's ...♕c7, although 9 e5 dxe5 10 dxe5 ♘d5 11 c4 ♘b4 12 ♘c3 a6 13 ♗f4 was more pleasant for White in V.Voskanyan-A.Ghannoum, Montreal 2007; this approach reminds me of the positions we will see in the King's Indian Attack section) 9 cxd4 d5 10 e5 ♘e4 11 ♗e3 is an improved version of the game for White.

7 c3 e6

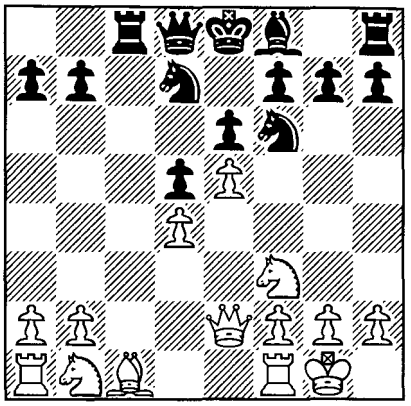
Alternatively:

a) 7...♕c7 was tried by the ever-creative and sadly-missed Tony Miles, but 8 d4 cxd4 9 cxd4 d5 10 e5 ♘e4 11 ♘bd2 ♕c2 12 ♘e1 ♕c6 13 ♘b3 left him in trouble due to the lack of squares for the e4-knight. M.Ghinda-A.Miles, Dortmund 1979, continued 13...♕g6 14 ♕b5 ♖c7 when White had an extremely pleasant choice of moves. The computer points out that 15 ♘d3! would have been the most accurate, with the idea 15...e6 16 ♘f4 ♕f5 17 f3 ♘g5 18 h4, trapping the black knight.

b) 7...c4 has also been tried, cutting across White's development, but undermining the pawn with 8 b3 ♕c7 9 bxc4

♕xc4 10 d3 ♕a6 11 c4 looks pleasant for White.

8 d4 cxd4 9 cxd4 d5 10 e5



So a French structure has been reached. This position is quite common with the bishop on e7 instead of the rook on c8. I think this difference gives us the chance to claim a small advantage.

10...♘e4

10...♘g8!? looks strange, but is understandable once you play through the game. Black will be forced to lose tempi with his knight anyway so decides to retreat it at once when he won't have to move either his f- or h-pawns to keep the knight. Black's position is solid, but White should be slightly for preference thanks to his lead in development: 11 ♘c3 ♘e7 12 ♗e3 ♘c6 13 ♘e1 ♗e7 14 ♘d3 0-0 15 ♕g4 with some chances on the kingside.

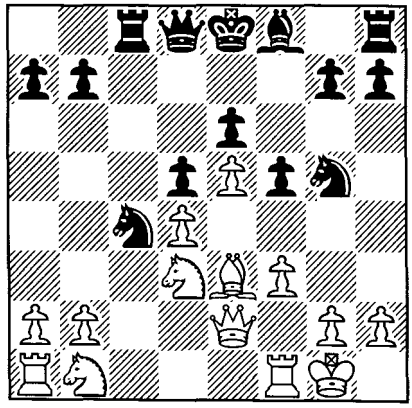
11 ♗e3

This idea has proved the most challenging. White's idea is to exploit the lack of squares for the e4-knight. Black will be forced to compromise his position somewhat to get the knight to safety.

11...♕b6

A typical French move although perhaps here it's not so useful, as d4 is securely defended and Black's knights are a long way from c6. Practice has also seen:

a) 11...♘b6 was Kasparov's choice. It was only in a simultaneous, but the fact that Kasparov lost the game must bode well for our choice: 12 ♘e1 ♘c4 13 ♘d3 (13 f3 doesn't yet trap the knight as Black has 13...♘c5! 14 dxc5? ♘xe3) 13...f5 14 f3 ♘g5 was M.Wahls-G.Kasparov, Hamburg (simul) 1985.



Here White could have tried 15 ♗xg5!? (15 ♘d2 ♘xe3 16 ♕xe3 ♗e7 17 ♖ac1 also looks a little better for White), since in this position the knights look stronger than the bishops as White can use both the c5- and f4-squares. After 15...♕xg5 16 ♖c1 ♕d8 17 ♘d2 White has the better chances: for example, 17...♕b6 18 ♘b3 ♗e7 19 ♘bc5 0-0 20 b3 with a small edge.

b) 11...♗e7 would be the most sensible, completing development, and after 12 ♘e1 we have:

b1) 12...f5 13 ♘d3 0-0 14 f3 ♘g5 (M.Ghinda-M.Chandler, Lucerne 1985) 15 ♘c3 when White's advantage is not large, but again Black lacks counterplay and we can start to press on both sides of the board. Black has to watch out for his e6-pawn, while we should keep in mind sacrificing a knight on d5 to start our central pawns running down the board.

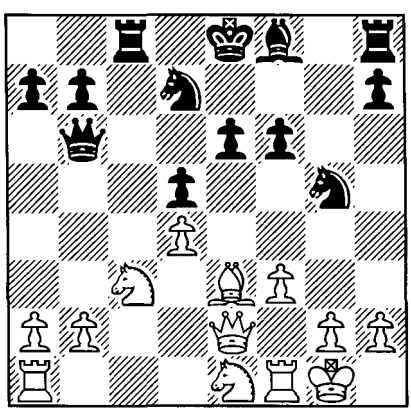
b2) 12...h6 is another way to keep the knight, but does nothing to prevent a white pawn thrust on the f-file: 13 f3 ♘g5 14 ♘c3 0-0 15 ♘d3 ♖c6 was J.Rueberg-S.Ottens, German League 2009, when the most accurate follow-up looks to be 16 ♖ac1 ♕b6 17 f4 ♘e4 (17...♘h7 18 f5! looks great for White) 18 ♘xe4 dxe4 19 ♘f2 ♖xc1 20 ♖xc1 f5 21 g4! and White has the start of a decent attack.

12 ♘e1 f6

The usual way to keep the knight, but here White can seize a strong initiative. 12...h6 is the alternative way to keep that knight which would be similar to note 'b2', above.

13 f3 ♘g5 14 ♘d3

Instead 14 exf6! would have exploited Black's early ...♕b6: 14...gxf6 (14...♘f7!? is probably necessary, although White is still better after 15 fxg7 15...♗xg7 16 ♘c3 0-0 17 ♖d1 ♘d6 18 f4 as there can't be enough for a pawn here) 15 ♘c3.



White takes the e4-square away from Black's knight, leaving him with severe problems. White's main threat is to push his f-pawn to f5, while 16 ♘xd5 and 17 ♗xg5 is also threatened:

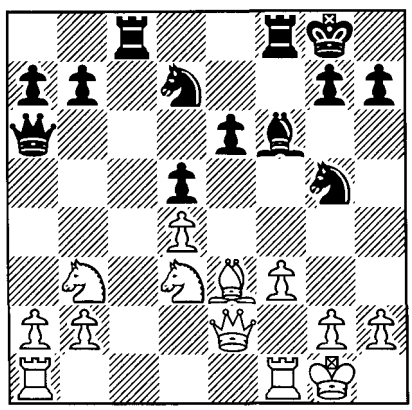
a) 15...♗g7 16 f4 ♘e4 (16...♘f7 17 f5 is already almost winning) 17 ♘xe4 dxe4 18 f5 exf5 19 d5 ♕d6 20 ♕h5+ ♔d8 21 ♖xf5 and White is in complete control.

b) 15...♗e7 16 ♘d3!? (again 16 f4 is possible with a clear advantage after 16...♘e4 17 ♘xe4 dxe4 18 f5) 16...0-0 17 ♗f2 shows another plan that White can employ. The e6-pawn is weak and Black will now no longer be able to jump his knight back into e4.

14...♗e7 15 ♘d2

15 ♘c3 0-0 16 exf6 ♗xf6 17 ♘e5 ♘b8 18 f4 must be a little better for White with his commanding knight on e5.

15...0-0 16 ♘b3 ♕a6 17 exf6 ♗xf6



A typical French-like position has arisen. Black has a vulnerable backward e-pawn and has given away an outpost on e5. Therefore he will try to play ...e6-e5 to liberate those weaknesses, although that will leave him with an isolated d-pawn. Meanwhile he has some play against our d4-pawn, down the c- and f-files and he can try utilizing the c4-square. I believe objectively White should be a little better and, more importantly from a practical perspective, these positions are difficult to play with the black pieces unless you have a good grounding in the French. As your opponent started with 1...c5 rather than 1...e6, we can presume he won't feel very comfortable here.

18 ♖fe1

18 ♕d2 ♘f7 19 ♘dc5 ♘xc5 20 ♘xc5 is an alternative way to proceed.

18...♘f7 19 ♗f2 ♘d8 20 ♕d2 ♕b5 21 ♘bc5 ♘xc5 22 ♘xc5 ♕e8 23 ♖ac1 ♖c6 24 ♖c3 ♖f7

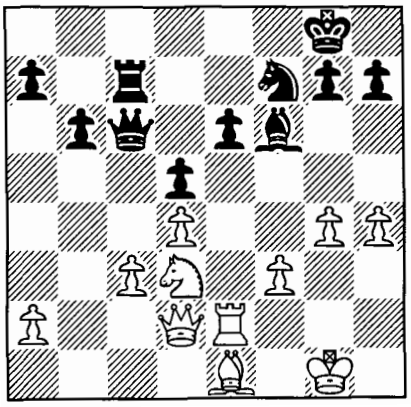
Over the last few moves Iordachescu has taken over the initiative, although he is still only a little better. At this point he decides to expand on the kingside.

25 h4!?

White isn't intending to pawn storm for a mating attack, but is trying to grab squares and suffocate Black.

25 ♘d3 would be a quiet alternative trying to make something on the queenside.

25...♖fc7 26 ♖e2 b6 27 ♘d3 ♖xc3 28 bxc3 ♕c6 29 ♗e1 ♘f7 30 g4



A continuation of the same strategy. If we can push Black's pieces away from e5 then we will have a pleasant advantage. The c3-pawn is a potential weakness, but for the moment it's defended satisfactorily.

30...♗d8

30...♗e7 would prevent White's following possibility.

31 ♔g2

Missing the chance to play 31 ♗g3! with the idea of 31...♖c8 32 ♘f4! followed by exchanging the c3- and e6-pawns when Black's king will become very vulnerable, i.e. 32...♕xc3 33 ♖xe6 and then:

a) 33...♔f8 34 ♕xc3 ♖xc3 35 ♖e2! g6 (35...♖xf3 36 ♘e6+ ♔g8 37 ♔g2 ♖a3 38 ♘xd8 picks up a piece) 36 ♗e1! ♖xf3 (36...♖c1 is the lesser evil, although 37 ♔g2 picks up the d5-pawn) 37 ♗b4+ ♔g7 38 ♘e6+ ♔g8 39 ♔g2 ♖f6 40 ♘xd8 ♘xd8 41 ♖e8+ again wins a piece.

b) 33...h6 34 ♕xc3 ♖xc3 35 ♖e8+ ♔h7 36 ♖f8 ♖c7 37 ♘e6 ♖d7 38 ♔g2 leaves Black in a dreadful position.

31...♖e7 32 ♗g3 ♗c7

Black gets closer to the draw.

33 ♗xc7 ♕xc7 34 ♕e1 ♕d6 35 ♖e3

35 f4 ♔f8 36 h5 might be the best way to try for something, although Black is pretty solidly placed.

35...♔f8 36 ♔h3 ♔e8 37 ♕b1 ♔f8 38 ♕e1 ♔e8 39 ♕e2 ♔f8 40 ♔g2 ♔e8 41 ♕d2 ♘d8 42 ♖e2 ♘c6 43 h5 ½-½

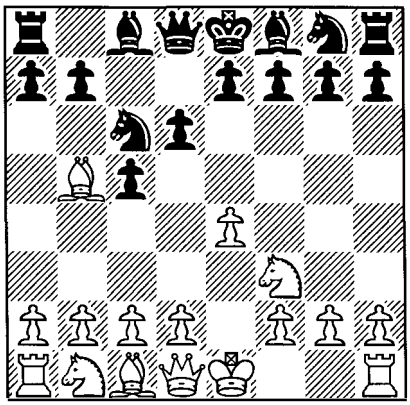
White still has his small advantage and he could carry on playing forever if he wished, but against an opponent rated 100 points higher he decides the chances that he will win are sufficiently low to offer a draw.

Conclusion

Recapturing with the knight on move 4 doesn't enjoy a very good reputation, but it is a solid option and not easy to crack. The lines examined in this chapter have similar themes to Chapter Three and give White good chances of obtaining the better game. Special care should be taken over the subvariations seen in Games 22 and 24 where Black tries to cross our plans.

Chapter Four
The Hybrid Variation

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘c6



Black's most aggressive response to 3 ♗b5+. It is known as the Hybrid Variation as it is a mix of the 2...d6 and 2...♘c6 systems. Black allows a structural deficiency in return for the bishop-pair and rapid development. White's main move is 4 0-0, but I have decided to advocate capturing on c6. Not only is it easier if we play the same way against all of Black's replies after the sequence 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5, but I also believe it gives White good chances to seize the initiative.

4 ♗xc6+

This line was endorsed by Mr ♗b5 himself, Sergei Rublevsky, in August of last year against a highly-rated opponent and so I can hardly be accused of offering an obscure line!

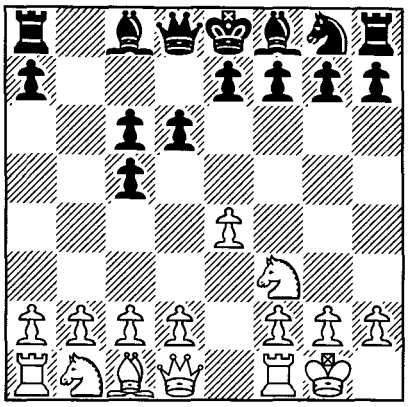
4...bxc6 5 0-0

Here Black has various ideas which will be examined in the illustrative games. Knowledge of Black's different options is necessary as play can become quite theoretical. If Black remains passive then we will be able to exploit our structural advantage and thus Black will likely try to unbalance the position.

In Games 25 and 26 we study the quieter lines in which White is allowed to conduct his plan of opening in the centre. Games 27-29 show Black employing direct methods, but as we shall see, these are very risky. Game 30 features the topical 5...♗g4 where White takes a structural advantage, but has to be careful defending his exposed king. The final two games of the chapter show sub-optimal plans for Black, which give us a very easy game.

Repertoire Outline

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘c6 4 ♗xc6+ bxc6 5 0-0



5...e5

Grabbing the centre thus has been the most common. Others:

a) 5...e6?! has been played by some strong players, including once yours truly, but 6 e5 leaves White with a very pleasant position.

b) Likewise, 5...♘f6 allows 6 e5!. Both lines are investigated in Game 32.

c) 5...g6 is a position that can also be reached in the following chapter, but 6 d4 looks promising – see Game 31.

d) 5...♗g4 is highly topical and has been the highest-rated choice. See Game 30 for the latest theoretical debate.

6 c3

Here we will try to undermine Black's position quickly with c2-c3 and d2-d4, exploiting our lead in development.

6...♘f6

This is the main line, but Black also has:

a) 6...g5 is the most aggressive try, but after Garry Kasparov demolished Judit Polgar we haven't seen many takers for the black side. This is covered in Game 29 which also looks at the rare options 6...♘e7 and 6...♗a6.

b) 6...f5 is most important line to know and has been played by many strong players. This is another very aggressive response, but extremely risky when Black is so far behind in development. If White plays accurately he has a very good position. However, you need to make sure you feel comfortable and can remember the theory – see Games 27 and 28.

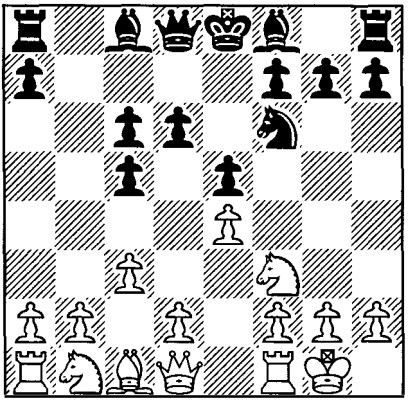
c) 6...♗g4 is a more solid response and is likely to transpose to the 7...♗g4 lines of Game 25.

7 ♖e1

Now Black has two options. Either he can fight for the centre with 7...♗g4, which has been slightly the more popular and is featured in Game 25, or he can simply develop with 7...♗e7 as seen in Game 26.

Game 25
S.Rublevsky-S.Tiviakov
European Club Cup, Kemer 2007

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 d6 4 ♗xc6+ bxc6 5 0-0 e5 6 c3 ♘f6

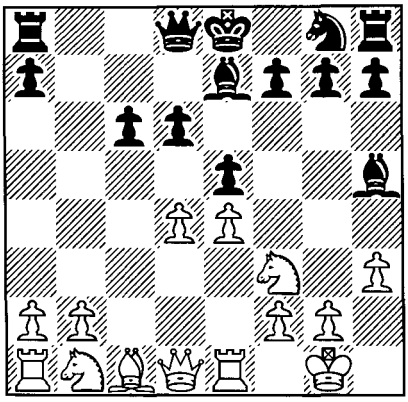


Black's most sensible move. He develops a piece and hits our e4-pawn.

6...♗g4 is likely to transpose to the game continuation, although White isn't obliged to play ♖f1-e1. Here we should immediately put the question with 7 h3:

a) 7...♗xf3 8 ♕xf3 ♘f6 and here 9 ♖e1 would transpose back to the main game, although Meier chose a quieter option with 9 d3 in a recent game, exploiting the fact that the rook doesn't need to move yet. Following 9...♗e7 10 ♘a3 0-0 11 ♘c4 ♖e8 12 ♗g5 White already had a pleasant positional plus. Black tried 12...♘d7?!, but 13 ♘xd6! f6 14 ♘xe8 fxg5 15 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 16 ♕g4 ♘f8 17 h4 left him struggling in G.Meier-A.Wirig, French League 2009.

b) 7...♗h5 8 ♖e1 ♗e7 (8...♘f6 would transpose to Rublevsky-Tiviakov) 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 with a further divide:



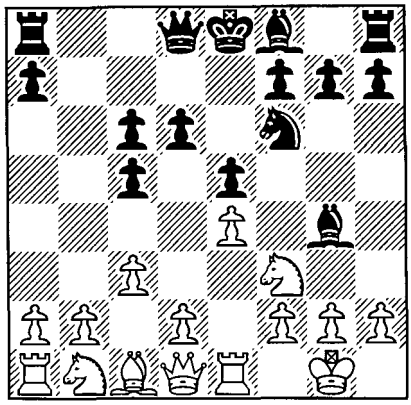
b1) 10...♗xf3 11 ♕xf3 exd4 was seen in A.Prihotko-T.Sukha, Alushta 2001, when 12 ♗f4 followed by e4-e5 next move is likely to win back the pawn with a very pleasant position. Black could try 12...c5 13 e5 d5, but 14 ♘a3 a6 15 ♘c2 with the idea of 16 b4 would leave him struggling as he cannot develop his kingside.

b2) The immediate 10...exd4 was preferred in M.Klinova-B.Ivkov, Wijk aan Zee 2001, but 11 g4! ♗g6 12 ♕xd4 ♘f6 13 e5 dxe5 14 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 15 ♘xe5 would have left White with a pleasant edge.

7 ♖e1

7 d4!? has also been tried, but recently Black's been holding his own here after 7...♘xe4 8 ♕a4 ♕b6 9 ♖e1 f5 10 dxe5 d5 11 c4 ♕a6 12 ♕xa6 ♗xa6 13 cxd5 cxd5, although it's possible that White might find a way to an advantage in this line.

7...♗g4



Fighting for the centre and trying to cut across our plan to open the position with d2-d4.

8 h3

Putting the question to the bishop immediately. It's useful having the bishop on h5 before we break in the centre so that the bishop cannot retreat back to e6.

8...♗xf3

Black stops White's d2-d4 break, but at the cost of giving up his advantage of the bishop-pair. White will always be a little better now thanks to his structural advantage (i.e. Black's doubled c-pawns), and Black is rather passive.

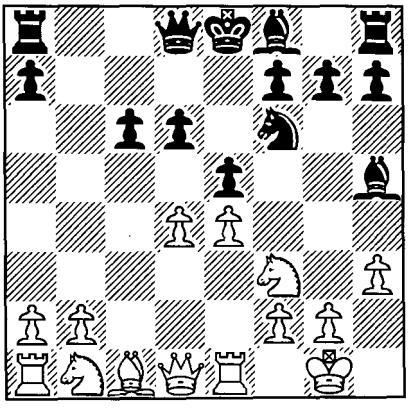
8...♗h5 is the alternative. The positions after 9 d4 are similar to those reached after 8 d4, which is another main line, but here Black's bishop has already been forced to h5. This means the bishop often becomes offside and sometimes we can even play g2-g4 disrupting Black further. Now:

a) 9...♗xf3 doesn't make so sense here as Black isn't winning a pawn after 10 ♕xf3 cxd4 11 cxd4:

a1) Indeed, 11...exd4?! doesn't win a pawn as 12 e5 dxe5 13 ♕xc6+ ♘d7 14 ♖xe5+ already wins the pawn back and, moreover, 14...♗e7 15 ♘a3 ♖c8 16 ♕a4 0-0 17 ♖d5 ♘b6 18 ♖xd8 ♘xa4 19 ♖xd4 leaves White a pawn up. Following 19...♘b6 20 ♗e3 Black can weaken White's structure with 20...♗xa3 21 bxa3 ♖c3, but he will have to defend a very unpleasant bishop versus knight endgame.

a2) 11...♗e7 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♕g3 (13 ♖d1!? ♕c7 14 ♗e3 0-0 15 ♘d2 ♖ad8 16 ♘c4 also looks very pleasant) 13...0-0 14 ♗h6 ♘e8 15 ♗e3 ♘d6 16 ♘d2 left Black under significant pressure on both sides of the board in Zhang Zhong-M.Paragua, Manila 2008. He has to watch out for his e5-pawn and ♗h6 ideas, while he has a permanent structural weakness due to his fractured queenside pawns.

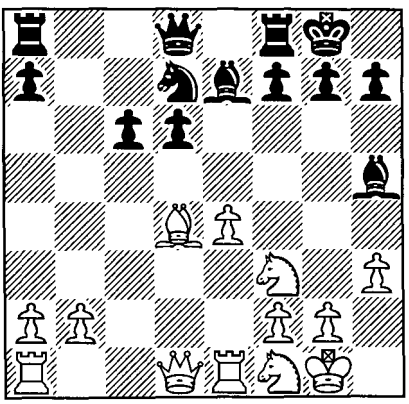
b) 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 and then:



b1) Again we would be very happy to see 10...exd4?!. Here we'd see a major difference with 8 h3 ♗h5 thrown in, namely 11 e5 dxe5 12 g4! and Black loses a piece: 12...♘xg4 (12...♗g6 13 ♘xe5 wins immediately as Black has no good way to prevent 14 ♘xg6 or 14 ♘xc6, since 13...♗e4 14 ♘d2 ♕d5 15 ♘d3 ♗e7 16 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 17 ♕e2 wins the knight) 13 ♘xe5! ♘xe5 14 ♖xe5+ ♗e7 15 ♕xh5 0-0 and in C.Chase-M.Khachiyan, Las Vegas 2004, somehow Black drew the game, but here White is clearly better with his extra piece. He should bring his knight into the centre immediately with 16 ♘d2 when there are zero problems with his king, and thus should be able to covert the extra piece without difficulty.

b2) 10...♕c7 11 ♘bd2 ♗e7 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♘c4 ♖d8 was tried in S.Rublevsky-R.Leitao, Poikovsky 2001, when the most accurate is 14 ♗d2 ♗c5 15 ♕b3, as 15...♖b8 16 ♗a5! ♕c8 17 ♕c3 picks up the e5-pawn.

b3) After 10...♘d7 11 ♗e3 ♗e7 12 ♘bd2 exd4 (or 12...0-0 13 ♕c2 ♕c7 14 ♖ec1 ♖ac8 15 b4 ♕b7 16 ♖ab1 ♗g6, as in O.Golovkina-N.Kharmunova, Moscow 2008, and then 17 dxe5 dxe5 18 ♖b3 would again have left White with an edge thanks to Black's weakened queenside) 13 ♗xd4 0-0 14 ♘f1 Black has the bishop-pair, but his bishop is a little offside on h5 and we have good chances to target his vulnerable c6- and d6-pawns.



An added bonus, as we'll see here, is that we can start a quick kingside initiative thanks to our strong dark-squared bishop: 14...♕a5 (14...♗f6 is suggested as an improvement by Psakhis, although White still has the better chances after 15 ♘1h2 ♖e8 16 ♖c1 c5 17 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 18 ♕d5 ♗xf3 19

♘xf3 with two pawn islands against three and we can focus attention on Black's backward d-pawn) 15 ♗c3 ♕c7 16 ♘g3 ♗xf3 17 ♕xf3 ♘e5 18 ♕e3 g6 19 f4 ♘d7 20 ♘f5! ♗f6 21 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 22 ♕d4 gxf5 23 ♕xf6 and White had a great position in S.Rublevsky-M.Sorokin, Russian Team Championship 2005.

c) 9...♘d7 10 ♗e3 cxd4 11 cxd4 transposes to variation 'b3'.

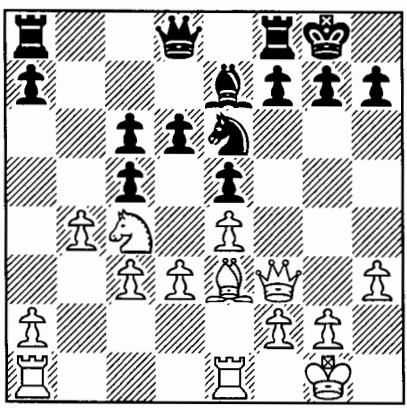
9 ♕xf3 ♗e7 10 d3

An improvement over Rublevsky's previous game. There he tried 10 ♘a3 0-0 11 ♘c4?! (11 d3 would likely transpose back into our main game) 11...d5! 12 ♘xe5 dxe4 13 ♕e2 ♕d5 14 ♘g4 ♖fe8 in S.Rublevsky-E.Alekseev, Poikovsky 2007, but here White's hole on d3 and problems developing his queenside are more relevant than Black's doubled c-pawns.

10...0-0 11 ♘d2 ♘e8

Tiviakov has a couple of ideas with this move. Firstly, he wants to relocate the knight to e6, thereby controlling the important c5- and d4-squares and therefore make it harder for Rublevsky to break open the position. Secondly, Black wants to exchange the dark-squared bishops to make his defensive task easier.

12 ♘c4 ♘c7 13 ♗e3 ♘e6 14 b4



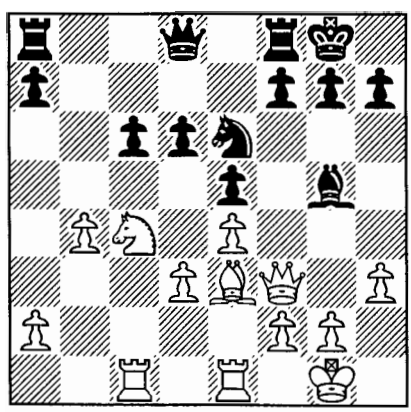
This move may look strange at first sight. White exchanges his good pawn for one of Black's doubled c-pawns. However, White needs to open up some lines on the queenside for his pieces. Now the c6-pawn can be targeted by a subsequent ♖c1.

I wonder too if we could flick in 14 ♕g4!? to deter the bishop exchange on g5 and prepare opening the f-file. Certainly 14...♗g5 15 ♗xg5 ♘xg5 16 f4 (16 ♘xd6 ♘xh3+ 17 ♕xh3 ♕xd6 is not so clear; true we have a much better structure, but Black has play down both the b- and d-files) 16...exf4 17 ♕xf4 d5 18 ♘d6 with an edge.

14...cxb4 15 cxb4 ♗g5

Tiviakov deviates from a previous game by Rublevsky. There his opponent played 15...♕d7 16 ♖ac1 ♖fc8 17 ♖c2 ♖ab8 18 a3 ♗d8 19 ♖ec1 ♗b6 20 ♕g4 g6 21 ♘xb6 axb6 22 d4 exd4 23 ♗xd4 c5 (S.Rublevsky-P.Tregubov, Krasnoyarsk 2007) when 24 ♗a1! would have left White with good attacking chances, with control of the open diagonal. Black's king looks very loose to me. After seeing this game it's understandable why the Dutch Grandmaster chose to exchange dark-squared bishops immediately.

16 ♖ac1



We want Black to exchange bishops on our terms and to remove the d4-outpost

from his grip. An interesting position has arisen. White will put pressure down the c-file towards the pawn on c6 and if possible will also want to play d3-d4, rectifying a structural weakness and opening the d-file, while putting pressure on the d6-pawn.

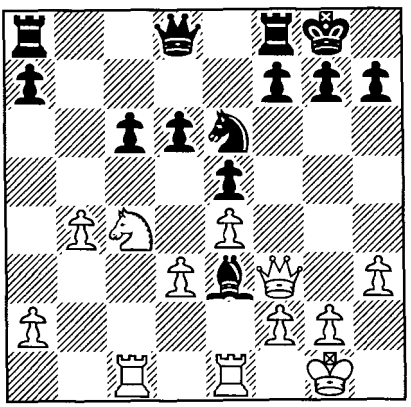
Tiviakov later repeated this position against the amiable Anglophile Russian Peter Svidler. He deviated with 16 ♖ab1 ♗xe3 17 fxe3 ♖b8 18 ♖ec1 (18 ♖f1 makes sense as the rook makes its way here in a couple of moves anyway) 18...♕d7 19 ♕g4 ♖fd8 20 a3 h6 21 ♖f1 and in P.Svidler-S.Tiviakov, German League 2008, a draw was agreed. White still has slightly better chances even if Black is pretty solid.

16...♗xe3

Black might also delay the exchange, but after 16...♕d7 17 ♕g4 he has to do something with his bishop:

a) 17...♗f6 18 a3 with a slight edge for White is an illogical line given by Ftacnik. If Black wants to keep bishops on the board then why did he play 15...♗g5?

b) 17...♗xe3 18 fxe3 ♖ab8 19 a3 ♖fd8 20 ♖ed1 is optimistically evaluated as a clear advantage to White by Ftacnik. True, we have the easier position and Black is forced to wait for our break with d2-d4, but then we will only have a small advantage.



17 fxe3!

Of course we should capture with the pawn here. We get rid of Black's outpost and prepare to break in the centre with d3-d4. In some positions we can also utilize the semi-open f-file. Black's main issue here is that he struggles for play while we have a few different ideas we can employ: targeting the c6-pawn, breaking with d3-d4 followed by hitting the pawn on d6, advancing on the queenside and playing on the f-file.

17...♕d7

17...♖b8 18 a3 c5 is a possible bid for play by Black and at least prevents us opening the centre, although after 19 ♖b1 (Ftacnik) Black has to be very careful. We have the strong positional threat of 20 b5! when we would be strategically winning as Black would not be able to stop the pawns indefinitely.

18 ♖ed1! ♖ad8 19 d4

19 h4!? is an interesting prophylactic idea, preventing the ...♘g5 of the game.

19...exd4 20 exd4 ♘g5 21 ♕f5 ♘xe4

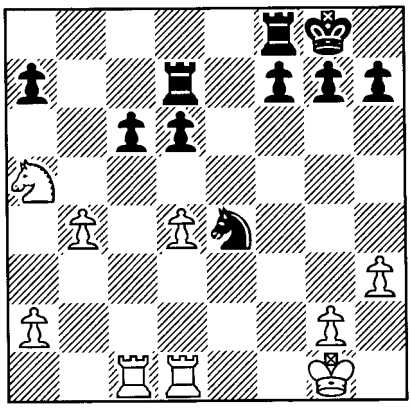
Tiviakov uses a tactic to simplify further, but he still has an unpleasant task before him. Instead 21...♕xf5 22 exf5 ♘e4 23 ♘a5 would be a culmination of White's strategy as the c6-pawn drops.

22 ♕xd7

Rublevsky decides to test Tiviakov in the ending.

22 ♕xe4 also looked promising: 22...d5 23 ♕f3 dxc4 24 ♖xc4 ♕e6!? (24...♖c8 25 ♖e1! is rather unpleasant for Black; after 25...♖fe8 26 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 27 ♕c3 ♕e4 28 a4 a6 29 ♔h2 preparing the b4-b5 break would put Black under a lot of pressure) 25 ♖xc6 (25 ♕xc6 ♕e2 gives Black decent counterplay) 25...♕xa2 26 ♕c3 would give White the better chances with his passed pawn in the major piece middlegame.

22...♖xd7 23 ♘a5



So White regains his pawn and can now start to use his queenside majority. Black's position continues to be awkward to handle.

23...f5

Activating the rook and a logical try for counterplay.

24 ♘xc6 f4

Black fights for counterplay. Sitting still here would be extremely dangerous: for example, 24...♖c7 25 b5 d5 26 a4 (26 ♖d3!? like the game might be more accurate) 26...g6 27 ♖c2 ♔g7 28 ♖b1 ♖fc8 29 ♔f1 followed by centralizing the king and eventually a4-a5 when Black must walk a tightrope to survive.

25 ♖d3!

Eyeing the a7-pawn, which of course must be defended or the connected passed pawns will roll home.

25...d5

The computer suggests 25...♖c7, with the idea of 26 ♖a3 (26 d5!?) 26...♖b8!, although we still have unpleasant pressure following 27 ♖e1 ♖xc6 28 ♖xe4 ♖c7 29 ♖a4! when Black is left with three vulnerable pawns (a7, d6 and f4).

26 ♖a3 ♖a8

A horrible-looking move to play, but 26...♖ff7 failed to defend the pawn: 27 ♘xa7! ♖xa7? 28 ♖c8+.

27 b5

27 ♖a5!? was an alternative plan, overloading Black's rooks, when 27...g6 28 ♘e5 ♖b7 29 ♘d3 picks up a pawn.

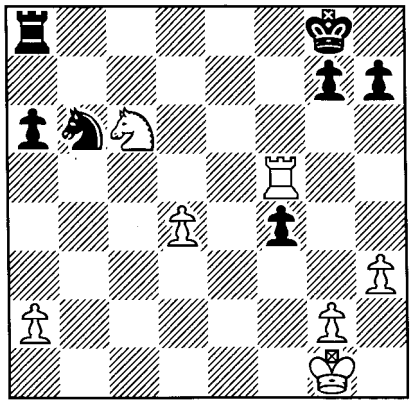
27...♖b7 28 ♖b1

28 b6!? was another promising idea: 28...♖xb6 (28...a6 29 ♖e1! threatens ♖a3-b3 next move, while if Black takes, 29...♖xb6, then 30 ♘e7+ is an even better version for White) 29 ♘e7+ ♔f7 30 ♘xd5 ♖b7 31 ♘xf4 and again White is a pawn to the good.

28...♘d6 29 ♖a5 a6

This loses a pawn, but it was hard to offer any good suggestions: for instance, 29...♘c4 30 ♖a6 ♘d2 31 ♖d1 ♘c4 32 a4 ♔f8 33 ♖e1 and Black can hardly move.

30 b6 ♘c4 31 ♖xd5 ♖xb6 32 ♖xb6 ♘xb6 33 ♖f5

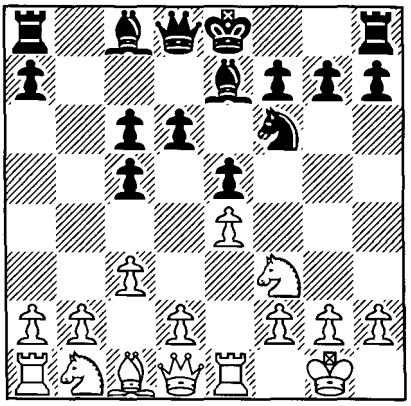


A transformation of advantages. Now Black is unable to defend the f4-pawn and thus is just going to be a pawn down. Rublevsky now shows perfect technique to convert.

33...g6 34 ♖xf4 ♘d5 35 ♖e4 ♖c8 36 ♖e6 ♖c7 37 ♖d6 ♘c3 38 ♘e5 ♔g7 39 d5 ♘xa2 40 ♖e6! ♔f8 41 d6 ♖c8 42 ♖f6+ ♔g8 43 d7 ♖d8 44 ♖f7 ♘b4 45 ♖e7 ♔f8 46 ♖xh7 g5 47 ♘g6+ 1-0

Game 26
S.Tiviakov-N.Noritsyn
Ottawa 2007

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 d6 4 ♗xc6+ bxc6 5 0-0 e5 6 c3 ♘f6 7 ♖e1 ♗e7



Black's alternative plan. He doesn't worry about the battle for the d4-square and instead completes his development on the kingside.

8 d4 cxd4

8...♘d7 was once tried by a grandmaster, but after 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 ♘a3 ♕c7 11 ♘c4 ♗a6 12 ♘e3 g6 in V.Yandemirov-S.Voitsekhovsky, St Petersburg 1999, 13 c4!? 0-0 14 ♗d2 ♖ad8 15 ♕a4 would have left Black with a very ugly position.

9 cxd4 exd4

Black relieves the pressure in the centre immediately. Otherwise:

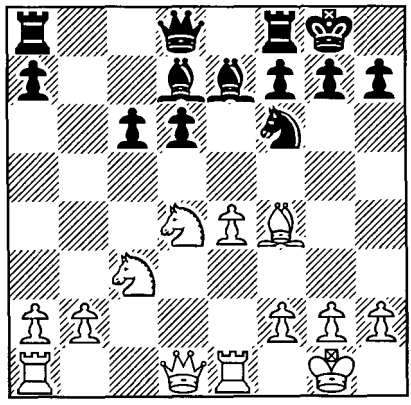
a) He can also try to hold on to his e5-pawn with 9...♕c7 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♘bd2, leading to:

a1) 11...♗a6 12 ♕c2 0-0 13 ♘c4 ♘d7 14 ♗d2 f6 15 ♖ac1 ♔h8 16 ♘h4!? ♘c5 was seen in V.Nevednichy-N.Fercec, Bosnjaci 2005. Here after 17 ♘f5 ♘e6 the aesthetically pleasing 18 ♘cd6! would have left Black under intense pressure. The idea is 18...♗xd6 19 ♕xc6 which regains the piece with a pawn advantage.

a2) 11...0-0 12 ♕c2 ♖e8 13 ♘c4 ♗b4 14 ♗d2 ♗xd2 15 ♘fxd2!? (15 ♘cxd2 ♖b8 16 ♖ac1 is also good for White) is exactly the position we are aiming for, V.Komliakov-A.Kudriashov, Ashkhabad 1996. Black has lost his advantage of the bishop-pair and is left with a weakened structure and nothing to show for it. We can play either to try and win the c6-pawn or to use the c5 outpost. Meanwhile it's not easy for Black to get any active play at all.

b) 9...♘d7 has also been tried by a couple of grandmasters, but after 10 ♕c2 ♗b7 11 dxe5 dxe5 (11...♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 dxe5 13 ♖d1 ♕c7 14 ♗e3 0-0 15 ♘c3 looks terrible for Black to me) 12 ♘bd2 ♕c7 13 ♘c4 0-0 14 ♗d2 I can't see what Black has for his compromised structure. You should remember the manoeuvre ♘b1-d2-c4 followed by ♗c1-d2 as a strong idea in this structure, since Black will have problems defending against ♗d2-♗a5, ♗d2-c3 and ♘c4-a5.

10 ♘xd4 ♗d7 11 ♘c3 0-0 12 ♗f4



This is a typical position for the variation. White has more space and an easy plan of directing all his pieces at Black's hanging c6- and d6-pawns. Black is rather

passive, but he hopes to soak up the pressure, defend his pawns and eventually exploit his bishop-pair advantage.

12...♕b6

Alternatively:

a) 12...d5 was tried by a young Levon Aronian, but following 13 exd5 ♘xd5 14 ♘xd5 cxd5 15 ♕f3 ♗f6 16 ♗e5 ♗xe5 17 ♖xe5 ♕b6 18 ♕c3 ♖ac8 19 ♕d2 Black was left suffering with his isolated pawn, V.Iordachescu-L.Aronian, Bucharest 1999.

b) 12...♖e8 has been Black's usual choice here, bringing the rook into the game and giving the bishop a retreat square. Then 13 h3 was played in a recent game, giving the bishop a retreat square and preventing Black from using the g4-square. After 13...♗f8 White broke immediately with 14 e5 but failed to obtain an advantage in Z.Andriasian-R.Mamedov, Ohrid 2009. Instead 14 ♘f3!? looks to give good chances to keep an edge: for example, 14...♗e6 15 ♕c2 ♕a5 16 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 17 ♖e3!, intending to double on the d-file or perhaps even swing to g3 to start proceedings on the kingside.

13 ♕d2

13 ♖b1!? looks rather strange, but would allow the queen to go to d3, i.e. 13...♖fe8 14 h3 (stopping Black being able to use the g4-square, an idea we've seen before) 14...♗f8 15 b4 h6 16 ♕d3 and White is definitely making progress.

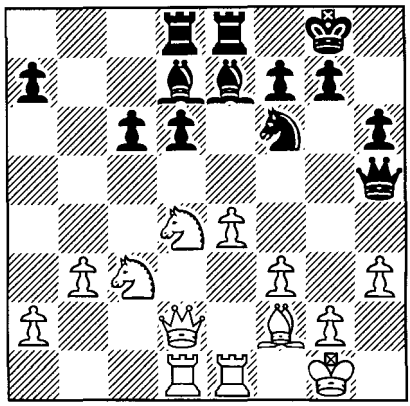
13...♖fe8 14 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 15 ♗g5!

Tiviakov has all his pieces on good squares so starts to manoeuvre and wait for Black to tire. The c6- and d6-pawns are currently defended satisfactorily, so Tiviakov plans on getting his bishop to its best square. The position is much easier for White to play as Black must be very patient. As will be seen in the game, moving the central pawns is not a good idea, but in the meantime Black has three vulnerable pawns to defend.

15...h6 16 ♗h4 ♕b7 17 b3 ♕b4 18 h3

18 f3 would make sense immediately, but there's not so much difference. It's useful, though, to point out that 18...♘h5?? loses to 19 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 20 ♘d5!.

18...♕c5 19 f3 ♕h5 20 ♗f2



So the bishop now targets a further weakness in Black's camp, the a7-pawn. Black has been unable to do anything effective over the last five moves.

20...d5

Noritsyn gets tired of waiting, but this allows the start of a pawn storm and gives away the c5-square. However, Black already seems to be in some trouble, as shown too by:

a) 20...♕a5?! 21 ♘d5! ♕xd2 22 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 23 ♖xd2 would leave Black with problems defending his dark squares.

b) 20...♗f8 21 ♘de2 c5 22 ♘f4 ♕e5 23 ♘d3!? ♕e6 24 ♘b2! ♗c6 25 ♘c4 and White would have definitely taken the upper hand.

21 e5

Tiviakov decides to keep the pieces on the board, although 21 exd5 looked very tempting. The endgame that arises after 21...♘xd5 22 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 23 ♕c2 ♕c5 (not

ideal, but White was threatening 24 ♘e6) 24 ♕xc5 ♗xc5 25 ♘c2 ♖xe1+ 26 ♘xe1 is very bad for Black as he is left with his queenside weaknesses. I'm surprised Tiviakov didn't try this, although the game is also very promising for White.

21...♘h7 22 f4

Now Black has to be very wary of the kingside pawns causing damage to both his king and queen.

22...♕g6

The queen needs to get out of there.

Trying to relocate his knight with 22...♘f8 would allow 23 ♘ce2! c5 (23...♕g6 is too late now as 24 f5! ♗xf5 25 ♘f4 ♕h7 26 ♘xc6 picks up a pawn) 24 ♘g3 ♕g6 25 f5 ♕g5 26 ♕xg5 hxg5 (26...♗xg5 27 ♘f3) 27 e6! which is very strong.

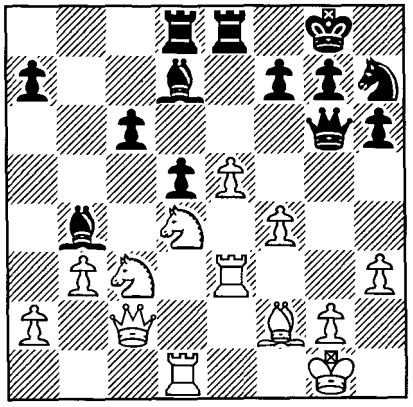
23 ♕c2!?

Continuing the theme of attacking Black's queenside pawns.

23...♗b4

23...♕xc2 24 ♘xc2 leaves Black with problems defending his a7-pawn.

24 ♖e3



24...c5?

This oversight loses the game.

24...♕xc2 was better, although 25 ♘xc2 ♗f8 26 ♘a4 would definitely leave White the one in control as the bishop on f2 dominates the board.

25 ♖g3! ♕xc2

25...♕h5 26 ♘xd5 is no better.

26 ♘xc2

Black's hanging pawns are... hanging. Unfortunately for Noritsyn he has no way to keep material parity.

26...d4

26...♗e6 27 ♘xb4 cxb4 28 ♘b5 would win at least a pawn, as 28...a5?! 29 ♘d6 ♖e7 30 f5 is curtains.

27 ♘xb4 dxc3

Or 27...cxb4 28 ♘e4 and the d4-pawn drops while the knight jumps in to d6 with decisive effect.

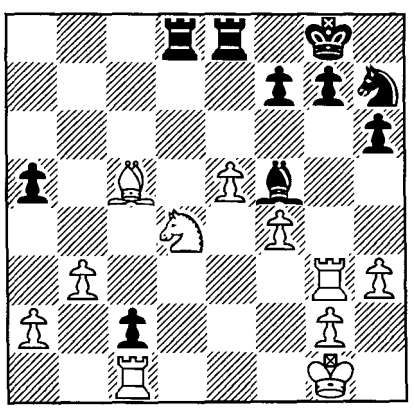
28 ♗xc5

So Tiviakov has won one pawn, while the one on c3 is currently more of a weakness than a strength.

28...a5 29 ♘c2 ♗f5 30 ♘d4

30 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 31 ♘d4 c2 32 ♖c3 ♘f8 33 ♗d6 was the simplest path to victory.

30...c2 31 ♖c1



31...♖xd4

Desperation, but the c2-pawn will not cause White any major problems.

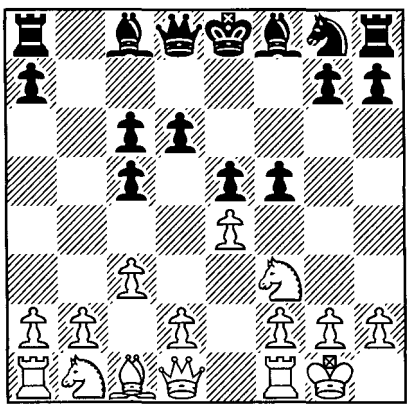
31...♖d5 was the alternative, but after 32 ♖c3 f6 33 ♘xc2 ♗xc2 34 ♖3xc2 fxe5 35 ♖e1 I expect someone of Tiviakov's experience would convert easily.

32 ♗xd4 ♖d8 33 ♗b2 ♘f8 34 ♖e3 ♘e6 35 g4 ♗d3 36 f5 ♘f4 37 ♔f2 g6 38 e6! fxe6 39 fxe6 g5 40 e7 ♖e8 41 ♗e5 ♗g6 42 ♗xf4 gxf4 43 ♖e5

Now Black doesn't have any saving chances as his rook is completely tied down. **43...♔f7 44 ♔f3 ♔f6 45 ♔xf4 a4 46 bxa4 ♖c8 47 ♖e2 ♖c4+ 48 ♔g3 ♖c3+ 49 ♔h4 ♖c8 50 ♖cxc2! 1-0**

Game 27
S.Rublevsky-E.Sveshnikov
Herceg Novi 1999

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 d6 4 ♗xc6+ bxc6 5 0-0 e5 6 c3 f5



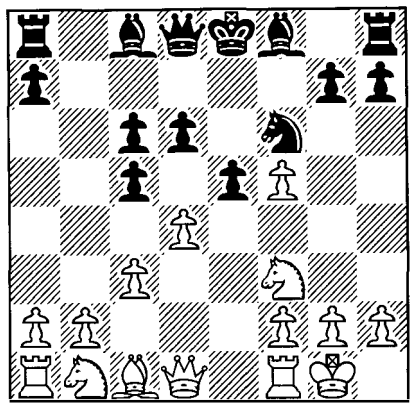
An aggressive response. Black tries to take over the centre immediately, before we have played d4 ourselves. The move is very risky as Black has not yet developed any pieces and the ensuing positions are very complicated.

7 exf5 ♗xf5

Taking back the pawn is the most logical move, but Black has tried a couple of risky alternatives.

a) 7...♗e7!? has been tried by Halkias a couple of times, but not really caught on: 8 ♕a4 ♕c7 9 d4 e4 10 ♘g5 ♗xf5 11 f3! exf3 was D.Solak-S.Halkias, Vrsac 2008, and here 12 ♘xf3 ♘f6 13 dxc5 leaves White with a comfortable edge.

b) 7...♘f6 was employed by a young Grischuk, but looks very risky after 8 d4 and then:



b1) 8...e4 9 ♘g5 (9 ♖e1 also looks promising, as the 9...♗xf5 10 dxc5 dxc5 11 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 12 ♘e5 ♖d6 of S.Nyysti-A.Grischuk, Reykjavik 2000, must favour White despite Rowson being enthusiastic about Black's position; here 13 ♘d2 ♗e7 14 ♘dc4 ♖e6 15 ♗f4 is very similar to the position reached in the note to Black's 9th move in our main game) 9...d5 (9...♗xf5 10 f3!, as pointed out by Palliser, looks extremely dangerous) 10 f3 h6 11 ♘e6 ♗xe6 12 fxe6 ♗d6 13 fxe4 dxe4 14 ♗e3 0-0 15 ♘d2 and even once the e6-pawn is recaptured, Black will stand worse with his compromised structure, D.Marciano-J.Lautier, Besancon 1999.

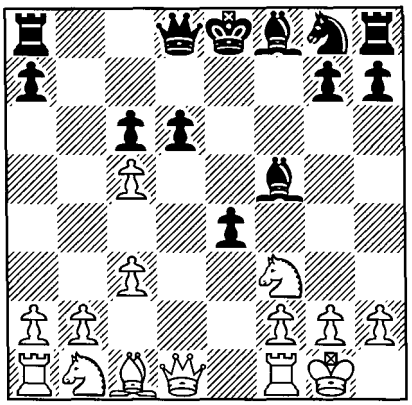
b2) 8...cxd4 9 cxd4 e4 is similar to the next game, but here we don't have the trick of 10 ♕c2. However, after the 10 ♘g5 d5 (10...♗xf5 11 f3 is very dangerous for Black) 11 f3 h6 12 ♘e6 ♗xe6 13 fxe6 ♗d6 14 ♘c3 0-0 of F.Vallejo Pons-B.Predojevic, Moscow 2007, and then the long line 15 fxe4 dxe4 16 ♕e2 ♕c7 17 g3 (17 ♗d2!?, not worrying

about 17...♗xh2+ 18 ♔h1, is another valid attempt at retaining the advantage) 17...♖ae8 18 ♘xe4 ♖xe6 19 ♖xf6!? gxf6 20 ♗xh6 f5 21 ♕c4 ♕f7 22 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 23 ♘d2 ♗h6 24 ♕d3 ♖e3 25 ♕f1 (Palliser) White should convert his extra material.

8 d4 e4

This is extremely dangerous and after closely analysing the line, I have to say plain bad. Normally Black first exchanges in the centre with 8...cxd4 which we will see in the next game, Tiviakov-Murariu.

9 dxc5!



A very dangerous piece sacrifice which I'm surprised hasn't been played more often.

9...exf3

Instead 9...dxc5 10 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 (M.Savic-N.Bojkovic, Belgrade 2001) 11 ♘e5 ♖d6 (or 11...♗d6 12 ♘xc6 ♖d7 13 ♘d2 and there's no way to trap the knight) 12 ♘d2 ♘f6 13 ♘dc4 ♖e6 14 h3 looks great for White, with Black's structure extremely ugly. We plan to play 15 g4 just to make sure we have no problems with the knight on e5, while if 14...h5 15 ♗g5 ♗e7 16 ♖ad1 0-0 17 ♖fe1 ♖e8 18 h4 Black would be bound down completely.

10 ♕xf3 ♗e6

Alternatively:

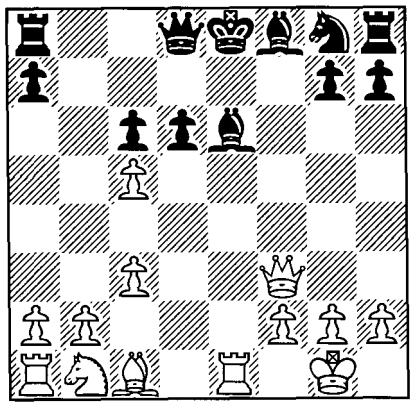
a) 10...♕d7 was played almost ten years later in the only other game I can find that went this far. Unfortunately for Black after 11 ♖e1+! he had great problems keeping his extra piece:

a1) In R.Chavez-S.Abu Sufian, Dresden Olympiad 2008, 11...♔d8 12 g4! regained the piece, leaving White material up while Black's king still has problems.

a2) 11...♗e6 12 ♕f5 ♔e7 manages to keep the extra piece, but 13 ♘d2! ♖e8 14 cxd6+ ♔d8 (or 14...♕xd6 15 ♘c4 ♕d5 16 ♗g5+ ♘f6 17 ♕f4 and Black's king won't survive) 15 ♕a5+ ♔c8 16 ♘c4! ♗xd6 17 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 18 ♕a6+ ♔d7 19 ♗f4! ♕xf4 20 ♕xa7+ ♕c7 21 ♖ad1+ ♗d5 (if 21...♔c8 22 ♕a8+ ♕b8 23 ♕xc6+) 22 ♕xc7+ ♔xc7 23 ♖xe8 leaves Black completely lost.

b) 10...♗xb1!? is a suggestion by Palliser, but 11 ♕xc6+ ♔f7 12 ♕d5+ ♔g6 13 ♖xb1 looks terrible for Black. White already has three pawns for the piece and Black's king is walking in the middle of the board by itself. If Black tries at least to grab a pawn back with 13...dxc5 then 14 ♕e4+ ♔f7 15 ♕c4+ ♔g6 16 ♕g4+ ♔f7 17 ♖d1 ♕e8 18 ♖d7+ ♗e7 19 ♗g5 followed by ♖b1-e1 wins.

11 ♖e1



Keeping up the pressure.

11 ♕xc6+ ♔f7 12 ♕b7+ ♔g6 13 ♖e1 also

looks possible, with a dangerous initiative.

11...♔d7

The king must get off the e-file.

11...♕d7 12 ♕f5 ♔e7 13 ♘d2 ♖e8 14 cxd6+ ♕xd6 15 ♘c4 ♕d5 16 ♗g5+ ♘f6 17 ♕f4 ♔f7 is another line previously offered as unclear, but in reality White is already winning with 18 ♘e5+ ♔g8 19 ♖ad1 ♕c5 20 ♗xf6 gxf6 21 ♘g4! when Black cannot hold back the tide of white pieces descending on his position: 21...♗g7 22 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 23 ♕xf6 ♕e7 (23...♗f7 24 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 25 ♖d8 ♕f8 26 ♕e5 ♔f7 27 ♖d3! ♔g8 28 ♕e6+ ♔g7 29 ♖f3 also wins) 24 ♕h6 ♕f7 25 ♖d3 ♗f5 26 ♕g5+ ♗g6 27 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 28 ♖d8 is one winning line.

12 cxd6

Rublevsky should have continued developing with 12 ♗f4!. Then:

a) 12...♘f6 13 cxd6 is pretty terrible for Black as he is not able to move his f8-bishop and thus coordinate his pieces, since 13...♗xd6? drops a piece to 14 ♗xd6 ♔xd6 15 ♖d1+ ♘d5 16 c4.

b) 12...d5 13 ♕e2 ♕f6 14 ♗e5 ♕f7 15 ♕a6! ♔d8 16 b4! (16 ♕xc6 ♖c8 isn't so clear), and White's bind is already virtually decisive. We simply play our knight into d4 and Black is helpless.

c) 12...♕f6 13 cxd6 would transpose to the game.

12...♕f6?!

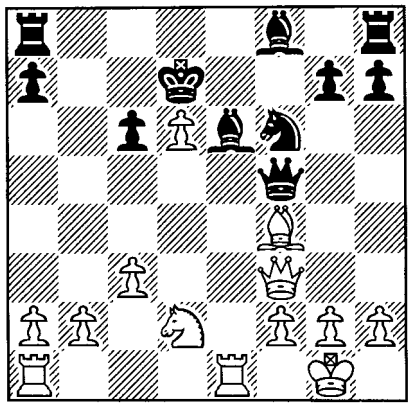
Understandably Sveshnikov tries to relieve some of the pressure on his position, but now he will never be able to move his dark-squared bishop.

12...♗xd6 had to be tried, despite leaving Black's king very vulnerable: 13 ♗f4 ♗xf4 14 ♕xf4 ♕f6 15 ♕b4 (15 ♕a4!? ♘e7 16 ♘d2 also looks very good for White) 15...♔c8 is a line given by Palliser, but now 16 ♘d2! (stronger than taking the draw with 16 ♕c5 ♔b7 17 ♕b4+) 16...♕g6 17 ♘f3 ♖b8 18 ♘e5! would leave Black in extreme difficulty.

13 ♗f4 ♕f5

13...♗xd6?! is now too late as 14 ♖d1 regains the piece: 14...♗d5 15 ♕g4+ ♕e6 16 ♕xe6+ ♔xe6 17 ♗xd6 ♔xd6 18 c4 and White is a pawn up in the endgame.

14 ♘d2 ♘f6



14...♗xd6?! again drops the piece, this time to 15 ♗xd6 ♕xf3 (15...♔xd6 16 ♘c4+ ♔c7 17 ♕g3+ ♔d8 18 ♖ad1+ is mating) 16 ♘xf3 ♔xd6 17 ♖ad1+.

15 ♕e2

This allows Black the possibility of getting back into the game, although his position remains very difficult.

15 c4! would have kept everything under control, as 15...♗xd6 16 ♗xd6 ♕xf3 (16...♔xd6 17 ♕g3+ wins on the spot) 17 ♘xf3 ♔xd6 18 ♖ad1+ would win back the piece and leave White a pawn to the good.

15...♖e8

Black should have got rid of the spike on d6 as soon as possible, although he is practically close to lost after 15...♗xd6 16 ♗xd6 ♔xd6 17 ♖ad1 ♗d7 18 ♘e4+ ♔c7 19 ♘d6, as White's bind is too strong and certainly worth a lot more than a piece for two pawns.

16 ♕e3! ♕a5

16...c5 is another Palliser suggestion. I think White should continue with 17 c4! g5 (17...♗xd6 18 ♗xd6 ♔xd6 19 ♕g3+ is a theme we've seen before) 18 ♗xg5 ♗xd6 19 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 20 ♘e4 ♕e5 21 ♕h6 ♔c6 22 ♖ad1 ♗f8 23 ♕d2 when Black's king is far too vulnerable to hope to survive.

17 ♘f3 ♗xd6

Sveshnikov finally takes the pawn, but it's too late.

17...♔c8 was possible, although after 18 b4 ♕b6 19 ♕d3 I don't see how Black hopes to survive with that pawn on d6 preventing the bishop and rook on the kingside getting out. Moreover, White isn't even any material down for this massive position.

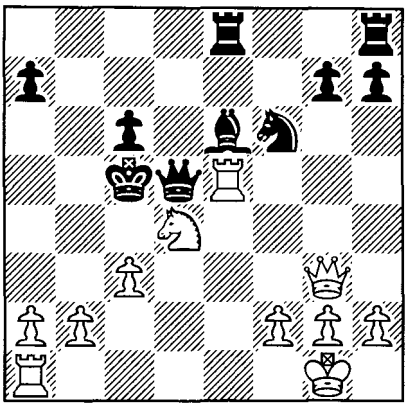
18 ♗xd6 ♔xd6 19 ♘d4 ♕d5

19...♗g4 20 ♕g3+ ♔d7 21 h3 would pick up the piece and the game.

20 ♕g3+ ♔c5

20...♔d7 21 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 22 ♕xg7+ is equally hopeless.

21 ♖e5



And Sveshnikov limped on, trying to prevent the game being published everywhere, but already my computer program gives White more than a five-point advantage.

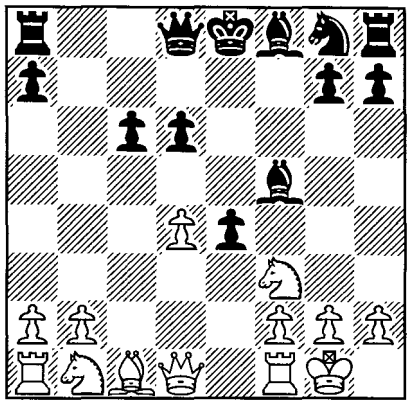
21...♔b6 22 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 23 f3 a5 24 ♕xg7 ♖hf8 25 b4 axb4 26 cxb4 ♘h5 27 ♕h6 ♘f4 28 ♖c1 ♔b7 29 b5 cxb5 30 ♕d6 ♖f7 31 ♘xb5 ♖ee7 32 ♘d4 ♔a7 33 ♖b1 ♖b7 34 ♘b5+ ♔a8 35 ♕d8+ 1-0

Game 28
S.Tiviakov-A.Murariu
European Championship, Dresden 2007

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 d6 4 ♗xc6+ bxc6 5 0-0 e5 6 c3 f5 7 exf5 ♗xf5 8 d4 cxd4

Generally Black exchanges in the centre to avoid the problems which he faced in the last game.

9 cxd4 e4



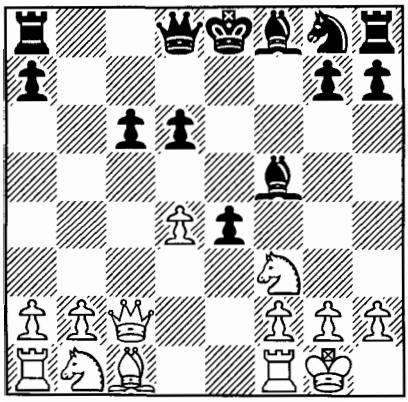
This prevents the line we saw last time, but means that the c6-pawn is now vulnerable. The most consistent way to exploit that seems to be...

10 ♕c2

...but 10 ♘fd2 also looks interesting:

a) 10...♘f6 11 f3 ♗e7 12 fxe4 (perhaps Palliser's 12 ♘xe4!? is stronger when I imagine Black should simply castle, with a complicated position) 12...♗g6 13 ♘c3 0-0 14 ♕e2 ♕d7 and Black had decent compensation for the pawn, N.Delgado Ramirez-H.Hernandez Carmenates, Santa Clara 2007.

b) I think the critical line is 10...d5 11 f3 e3, but 12 ♖e1 (12 ♘b3 ♗d6 13 ♕e2 ♘e7 14 ♗xe3 0-0 also gave Black reasonable play for the pawn in M.Klinova-S.Agrest, Istanbul 2000) 12...♗d6 13 ♘f1 ♘e7 14 ♘c3 0-0 15 ♗xe3 ♘g6 16 ♕d2 favoured White with his extra pawn although the position was still far from clear in I.Ionescu Brandis-B.Kadziolka, Istanbul 2003.



Black has tried various moves after 10 ♕c2, but hasn't managed to find equality. Bear with me, though, as I have offered quite a few lines here because I think it is critical to our repertoire.

10...♖c8

Otherwise:

a) 10...♘f6 11 ♗g5 ♗e7 12 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 13 ♕xc6+ ♔f7 14 ♕d5+ ♔g6 15 ♘fd2 ♕g8 16 ♕xd6 ♕b8 17 ♕a3 ♗xd4 18 ♘c3 and due to the strange location of Black's king, he couldn't really claim to have any compensation for the pawn in A.Chernobai-V.Kovalev, Moscow 2009.

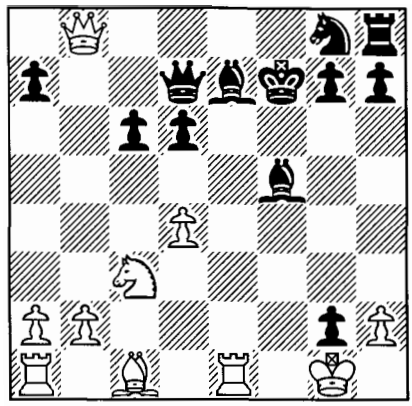
b) 10...♘e7 11 ♘h4 g6 12 ♗g5 ♕d7 13 ♘d2 d5 14 ♗f6 ♖g8 was G.Borgo-S.Halkias, Cutro 2001, when 15 ♘b3 would have left the Greek Grandmaster sweating.

11 ♘g5 ♘f6

Again there are alternatives:

a) 11...♘e7 was Tiviakov's choice a few rounds previously in R.Ovetchkin-S.Tiviakov, Dresden 2007. It's interesting to note that after getting a horrible position with Black he decided to become a turncoat and try the White side! Here 12 ♕e2! looks strong: for example, 12...d5 13 f3! exf3 14 ♘xf3 ♕d6 15 ♘c3 g6 16 ♗g5 would leave White with an overwhelming position.

b) 11...♕d7 is perhaps Black's best try and has been essayed by Fercec a couple of times. However, 12 f3 hasn't been tried but looks critical to me. My main variation runs 12...exf3 13 ♕b3 fxg2 14 ♖e1+ ♗e7 15 ♘f7 ♖b8 16 ♕xb8+ ♔xf7 17 ♘c3, reaching a very messy position and one that could do with testing.



Here I believe White should be doing fairly well as Black will struggle to develop his kingside pieces.

c) 11...d5?! would again allow the very dangerous 12 f3! ♘h6 13 fxe4 dxe4 (S.Soylu-S.Halkias, Antalya 2004) 14 ♖xf5! ♘xf5 15 ♕xe4+ ♘e7 16 ♘c3 ♕d7 17 ♘e6 ♔f7 18 ♗g5! ♘d5 19 ♖f1+ ♔g8 20 ♗d8, as given by Martin, which leaves White with a decisive advantage.

d) 11...♘h6?! 12 ♘xe4 d5 13 ♗xh6 ♗xe4 14 ♕e2 gxh6 15 f3 was equally hopeless for Black in S.Midoux-N.Ninov, Saint Affrique 2003.

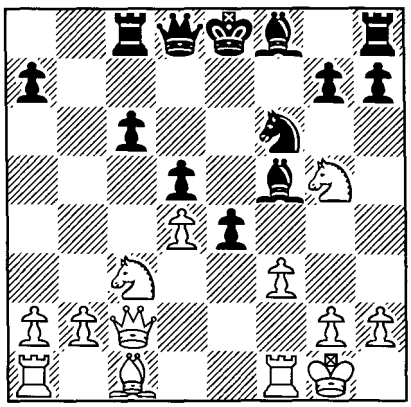
12 ♘c3

12 f3 is a more accurate move order according to Tiviakov, since 12...d5 13 ♘c3 transposes back to the game. Meanwhile 12...♕b6 can be met by the straightforward 13 ♗e3 which looks good to me.

12...d5

Now 12...♕d7 was possible, although White keeps the upper hand after 13 ♕e2 d5 (13...♗e7 14 ♘cxe4 ♘xe4 15 ♘xe4 is given as a little better for White by Tiviakov) 14 f3 ♗e7 15 fxe4 ♘xe4 16 ♘gxe4 dxe4 17 ♗f4! ♕xd4+ 18 ♗e3 ♕d7 19 ♕c4 with a strong initiative.

13 f3!



Again we see this classic breakthrough, opening the f-file before Black has had time to get his king safely castled.

13...♗g6

13...♕d7 14 fxe4 dxe4 (Tiviakov also mentions 14...♗xe4 15 ♘gxe4 dxe4, but here 16 ♗g5! ♗e7 17 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 18 ♕xe4+ would leave White a clear pawn up) 15 ♕b3! (Tiviakov) gives White a great position on all levels. He threatens 16 ♖xf5 and I feel Black's king will be the deciding factor.

14 fxe4 h6

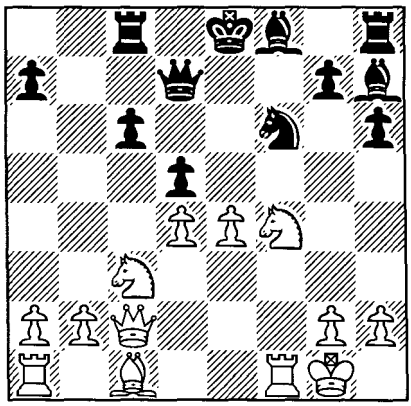
14...dxe4 15 ♗e3 will win the e4-pawn (Tiviakov).

15 ♘e6 ♕d7 16 ♘f4

Simpler would have been 16 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 17 ♗f4 (Tiviakov), when White has an overwhelming position. Not only is he structurally better, but Black also has grave problems finding a safe haven for his king.

16...♗h7

16...♗xe4 17 ♘xe4 dxe4 cannot be seriously considered as Black has too many gaping holes in his position.



17 ♕e2!

Tiviakov sacrifices both central pawns for a very powerful attack.

17...dxe4

17...♘xe4 18 ♘xe4 dxe4 19 ♕h5+ does not seem to be a decisive attack, as Tiviakov suggests, but White is still doing very well after 19...♕f7 20 ♕e5+ ♔d7 21 ♗e3 ♕f5 22 ♘d3! ♕xe5 23 ♘xe5+ ♔e6 24 ♖f7.

18 ♘h5 ♕xd4+

Black might as well take a pawn for his suffering, but Tiviakov's attack will be simply too strong.

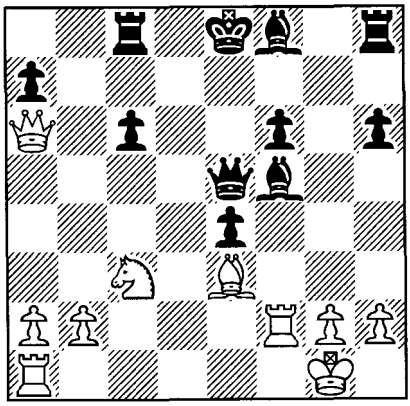
19 ♗e3 ♕e5 20 ♘xf6+

The immediate 20 ♕a6! was overlooked by Tiviakov, but was stronger as now 20...♗f5 could be met by 21 ♖xf5! ♕xf5 22 ♖f1 ♕e6 23 ♖f4! with a decisive attack.

20...gxf6 21 ♕a6 ♗f5 22 ♖f2

White's attack is still very strong. He is nominally a pawn down, but can pick up

the pawn on a7 whenever he wants. Meanwhile Black still has king problems.



22...♗e7 23 ♖af1 ♗e6 24 ♕xa7

So material parity has been restored and White has a safe clear advantage as Black's pawns are still too scattered and his king vulnerable.

24...♖d8

24...♖f8 25 ♗d4 ♕b8 26 ♘xe4 would also leave Black a pawn down.

25 ♕a4!

Hitting both c6 and e4, and therefore going a pawn up.

25...♖d3 26 ♕xc6+

26 ♕a8+ ♗d8 27 ♖e1 was perhaps strongest when Black would do well to keep his e4-pawn while c6 is doomed.

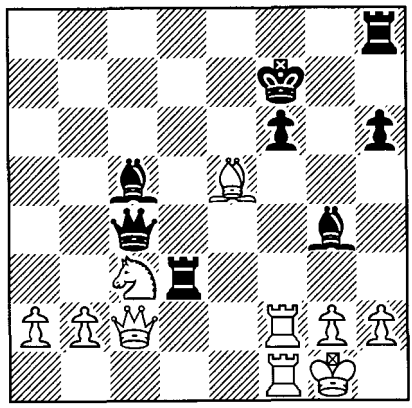
26...♔f7 27 ♗f4 ♕d4 28 ♕xe4

Criticized as a major inaccuracy by Tiviakov, but actually probably the best move. Instead 28 ♘xe4 was his suggestion, but he doesn't mention 28...♖d8 which appears to give Black dangerous compensation for the pawns.

28...♗c5 29 ♕e2 ♕c4 30 ♗e5

30 ♔h1 ♗xf2 31 ♕xf2, as given by Tiviakov, was the simplest path when White's safer king and two passed pawns are more than a match for the exchange.

30...♗g4 31 ♕c2



31...♖e8?!

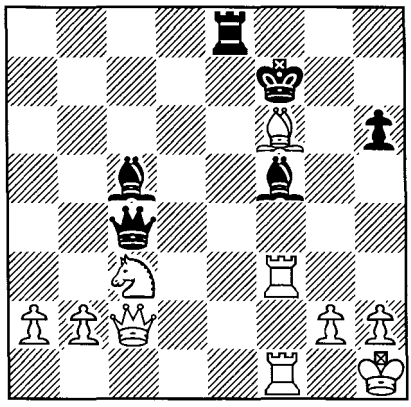
This spoils Black's fightback. 31...♖d1 32 ♖xd1 ♗xd1 is suggested by Tiviakov, but 33 ♕f5 ♕e6 34 ♕xe6+ ♔xe6 35 ♗xf6 ♗xf2+ 36 ♔xf2 ♔xf6 37 ♘xd1 would leave with Black a difficult task to hold the draw. However, 31...♗f3! would have forced Tiviakov to suddenly have to play accurately. After 32 ♗g3 ♗b7 Black has dangerous pressure.

32 ♗xf6?!

Returning the favour. Tiviakov explains in his annotations that both players were in desperate time trouble at this point.

White should have first thrown in 32 b3 ♕a6 before capturing the pawn, as 33 ♗xf6 ♗f5 34 ♗h4! is good for him.

32...♗f5 33 ♔h1 ♖f3 34 ♖xf3



A good practical move. Now it will be White attacking in the time trouble. Tiviakov has rook and three pawns for the queen so isn't much material down either.

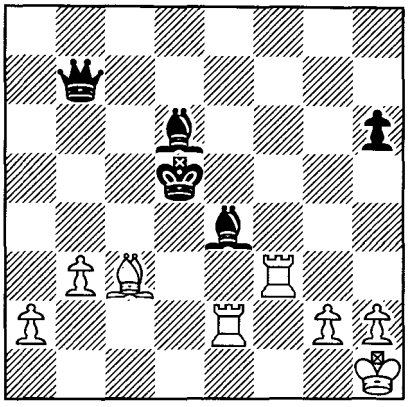
34...♗xc2 35 b3 ♕b4?!

As Tiviakov observes, Black should have taken the opportunity to sacrifice his queen back with 35...♕xf1+! 36 ♖xf1 ♗d3 when White's rook is tied to the back rank, due to the mate threats, and thus 37 ♗d4+ ♗xf1 38 ♗xc5 is forced, but 38...♖e1 should leave Black with enough play to hold the draw without any real difficulty.

36 ♘d5 ♕b7 37 ♗c3+

Tiviakov misses the chances to win a piece with 37 ♗d4+! ♔e6 38 ♘f4+ ♔d6 39 ♗xc5+ ♔xc5 40 ♖c3+, with too much material for the queen.

37...♔e6 38 ♖e1+ ♔xd5 39 ♖xe8 ♗d6 40 ♖e2 ♗e4



The time control has been reached and an interesting material balance of two rooks and three pawns versus queen and bishop has been reached. I would say that White has the better practical chances because of Black's exposed king, but the position is still exceedingly complex.

41 ♖f6

41 ♖d2+ ♔c5 42 ♖f6 ♗c7 was a better try according to Tiviakov, although he has nothing immediate here.

41...♗b4!

Murariu needs to exchange a pair of bishops to change his king's position from a weakness to a strength.

42 ♖d2+ ♔c5 43 ♗d4+ ♔d5 44 ♖d1

Playing for a win.

44...♗c2 45 ♖c1 ♕h7!?

Criticised by Tiviakov, but if Black wants to keep winning chances this is not a bad move. Instead 45...♔xd4 46 ♖xc2 is likely to end up drawn.

46 ♗e3 h5?!

But this is bad. 46...♕d3 was better, coordinating Black's pieces as 47 ♗xh6? (47 ♖f2! keeps White in the game) 47...♕e2! leaves Black with a very dangerous-looking attack.

47 ♖f2

47 ♖f4! should have been played.

47...♗d3

47...♕e7! kept equality. In such strange positions it's hard to play accurately.

48 ♖f4!

Back on track.

48...♗a3 49 ♖d4+ ♔e5 50 ♖e1 ♔f6

And this loses. The computer states that 50...♗b5 was the only way to carry on, but 51 ♗f2+ ♔f6 52 b4! gaining the dark squares would leave Black practically lost.

51 ♖d5 ♗e4?!

51...♕g6 52 ♖d1 ♗e4 53 ♖d6+ ♗xd6 54 ♖xd6+ ♔e5 55 ♖xg6 ♗xg6 would have lasted longer, but despite the opposite-coloured bishops the extra three pawns are enough to win.

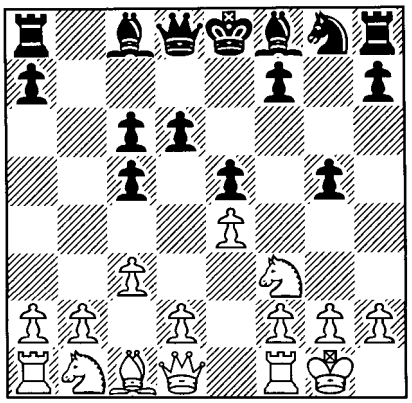
52 ♗d4+ ♔f7 53 ♖d7+ ♗e7 54 ♗c5 ♗xg2+ 55 ♔g1!

Black loses the bishop and the game.

55...♕g8 56 ♖dxe7+ ♔f6 57 ♗d4+ ♔f5 58 ♖1e5+ ♔f4 59 ♗e3+ ♔f3 60 ♖f5+ ♔e2 61 ♖f2+ ♔d3 62 ♖xg2 ♕c8 63 ♗f2 ♕c1+ 64 ♖e1 1-0

Game 29
G.Kasparov-J.Polgar
Prague (rapid) 2002

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘c6 4 ♗xc6+ bxc6 5 0-0 e5 6 c3 g5?!



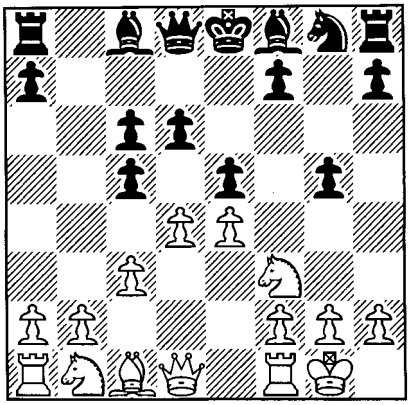
Excessively risky. Polgar was in a must-win situation in the mini-match which prompted this move, but as we will see, Kasparov wasn't going to shy away from a challenge.

As well as 6...♘f6, 6...♗g4 and 6...f5, Black has also been known to try:

a) 6...♘e7 is another rare approach, but was seen in one high-rated clash: 7 d4 ♘g6 was P.Svidler-V.Zvjaginsev, Moscow 2005, when I like the immediate 8 dxe5 ♗a6 (8...♘xe5 9 ♘xe5 dxe5 10 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 11 c4 is very ugly, especially as Black has no knight to stick on d4) 9 ♗g5! f6 (both 9...♕c7 and 9...♕b8 can be dealt with by 10 exd6) 10 exf6 gxf6 11 ♗e3 ♗xf1 12 ♕xf1 which gives White great compensation for the exchange, with a pawn and play on the light squares.

b) 6...♗a6 has also been tried from time to time: 7 ♖e1 ♗d3 (the only logical continuation of Black's previous move; 7...c4 is dealt with efficiently by 8 ♘a3! ♕a5 9 b4! cxb3 10 axb3 ♕c7 11 d4 and already White has taken full control, M.Etmans-C.Baljon, Leeuwarden 1997) 8 ♖e3 c4 9 ♕a4 ♖c8 was seen in I.Rausis-M.Bosboom, Loewenstein 1997, and here White has a choice of which pawn to take: either 10 ♘e1 or 10 ♘a3 f5 11 exf5 ♗xf5 12 ♘xc4, both with a clear advantage to White.

7 d4!



The move that ...g5 was designed to prevent. If Kasparov can successfully get away with this move then I think we can hope our opponents play ...g5 too. White sacrifices a pawn, but in return Black has a lot of holes in her structure.

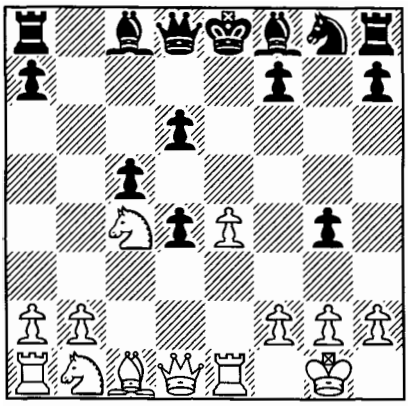
7...g4 8 ♘fd2 cxd4 9 cxd4 exd4 10 ♘c4 c5

Polgar holds on to her extra pawn so that she at least has something for her suffering.

The first time this position was reached Black tried 10...♗g7, but following 11 ♗f4 ♗e6 (11...d5 12 ♘d6+ ♔f8 13 exd5 cxd5 14 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 15 ♕xg4 is equally horrible) 12 ♘xd6+ ♔f8 13 ♘d2 (13 e5!? ♕b6 14 ♘d2 ♘e7 15 ♘2c4 ♕c5 16 b4 also gives White a great initiative) 13...♘e7 14 ♘b3 ♕b6 15 ♖c1 ♘g6 16 ♗g3 h5 17 ♘f5 in S.Rublevsky-A.Stripunsky, Kazan 1995, Black had a really ugly position. Initially I thought White had great compensation for his sacrificed pawn,

but then realized he's not even a pawn down! And, yes, this is yet another idea invented by Rublevsky. You could do a lot worse than following his recent games for any updates on the theoretical status of the whole 3 ♗b5(+) Sicilian.

11 ♖e1!



Preparing the e4-e5 break. Black may have an extra pawn, but already her pawn structure has been severely compromised, she's a long way behind in development and there's no safe haven for her king. Initially my computer liked Black's extra pawn, but even the materialistic machine is less optimistic now.

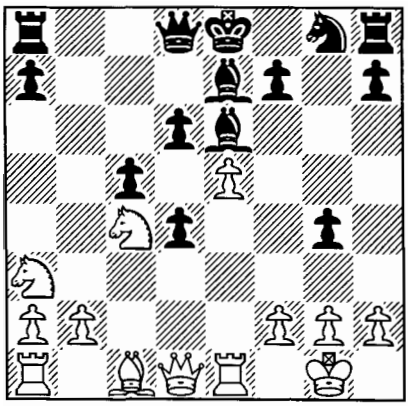
11...♗e6 12 ♘ba3 ♗e7

Alternatively:

a) 12...h5 was an attempted improvement in a recent game. It surprises me that anyone chooses to play this way with Black, but perhaps in this case 6...g5 was over-the-board inspiration? L.Genova-A.Nikolova, Dupnitsa 2010, saw 13 ♗f4 ♘h6 14 b4! ♗e7 and here White could win the pawn back with 15 ♕c1 g3!? (15...♘g8 16 e5! dxe5 17 ♗xe5 ♖h6 18 bxc5 ♗xc5 19 ♘b5 ♔f8 20 ♘cd6 ♗xd6 21 ♗xd6+ ♔g7 22 ♗e5+ ♘f6 23 ♘xd4 regains the pawn and leaves Black with no hope) 16 hxg3 ♘g4 17 bxc5 dxc5 18 f3 ♘f6 19 ♘b5 when White has an obvious and clear advantage; indeed, the position is already close to winning.

b) After 12...♘f6 13 ♕a4+! (this looks very strong; instead 13 ♗g5 ♗e7 14 e5 dxe5 15 ♘xe5 with compensation was a line given by Kasparov) 13...♕d7 14 ♘b5 the threats of ♘xd6+ and ♘c7+ force 14...♗xc4 15 ♕xc4 a6, although 16 e5! axb5 17 exf6+ ♔d8 18 ♕d5 ♖a7 19 ♗f4 leaves White in total control.

13 e5



13...d5

Polgar tries to keep the position closed but Kasparov's next more or less refutes it. 13...dxe5 had to be tried, but obviously White has great play: 14 ♘xe5 ♕d5 15 ♘d3! (15 ♘xg4 ♘f6 wouldn't be so clear as Black has successfully coordinated her pieces) 15...♘f6 16 ♗h6 ♖g8 17 ♕a4+ ♗d7 18 ♕a5 and Black's king has been caught in the centre which spells trouble. For example, 18...c4 19 ♖xe7+! ♔xe7 20 ♖e1+ ♗e6 21 ♕c7+ ♕d7 22 ♕xc4 would leave White with great compensation for the exchange.

14 ♘d6+! ♔f8

Polgar had to continue her policy of taking the material even if 14...♗xd6 15 exd6 ♕xd6 16 b4!, as offered by Kasparov, looks terrible for Black. Black's dark squares are ruined and so her king will never find

safety. Psakhis continues the analysis with the line 16...♘e7 17 bxc5 ♕xc5, but here I think 18 ♘c2 is more accurate than his 18 ♗b2. Then after 18...♘f5 19 ♗b2 ♖b8 20 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 21 ♘xd4 0-0 22 ♕d2 White can continue to exploit Black's advanced kingside.

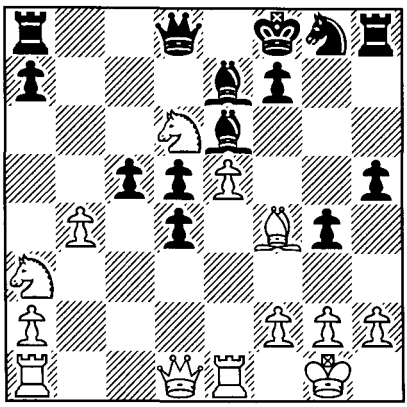
15 ♗f4?!

15 b4! would be a more accurate move order, immediately forcing a concession from Black.

15...h5?!

15...♖b8 had to be played to prevent White's b2-b4 break, even if White keeps a very promising position with 16 ♕d2 ♕b6 17 ♖ac1, as 17...♕xb2? loses to 18 ♗h6+! (or 18 ♖b1) 18...♘xh6 19 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 20 ♖b1.

16 b4!



Kasparov finds it second time round and Polgar's position collapses.

16...c4

16...cxb4 would put Polgar two pawns up very temporarily, but after 17 ♘ab5 ♕b6 18 ♘xd4 White has a decisive advantage – just compare the quality of the respective minor pieces.

17 ♕xd4

Now Kasparov is level on material and definitely up on position.

17...h4 18 ♘ab5 ♖h5 19 ♕e3

White plays a little superficially, as one might expect in rapid chess, and decides to put all his minor pieces on pretty squares in the centre of the board.

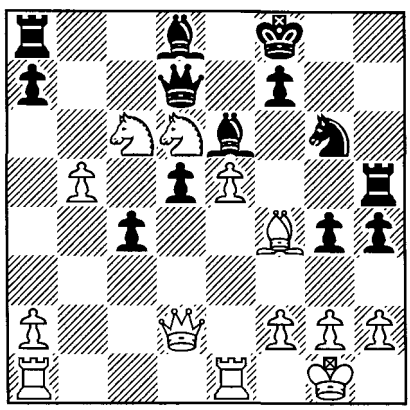
As Psakhis and Palliser point out, there was nothing wrong with 19 ♘xa7! when Black can keep material equality with 19...♗xd6 20 exd6 ♕d7 21 ♗e3 ♕xd6, but the a- and b-pawns will roll through without any meaningful opposition.

19...♕d7 20 ♘d4 ♗d8 21 ♕d2

An indication that Kasparov isn't sure how to proceed, but luckily his position is good enough to give away a couple of tempi.

21 f3! was the most precise way of continuing.

21...♘e7 22 b5 ♘g6 23 ♘c6!



Very visual knights and psychologically damaging for Black as those knights seem to suffocate her. However, she has played well over the last few moves and her pieces have started to coordinate (thanks to the couple of tempi which Kasparov gave her with his ♕d4-e3-d2 rather than capturing the a7-pawn). However, here Polgar plays too aggressively.

23...c3?!

All this achieves is a loose pawn.

Taking a time out to improve the posi-

tion of her king with 23...♔g8 was better. Kasparov could give up one of his monster knights with 24 ♘xd8 (or 24 a4 f6 25 exf6 ♗xf6 and Black's pieces somehow make sense) 24...♖xd8 25 ♗g5, but then 25...h3 isn't clear.

24 ♕c1

24 ♕d4!? ♗b6 25 ♕b4 ♔g8 26 ♗e3 would also favour White.

24...g3?

And this simply doesn't work.

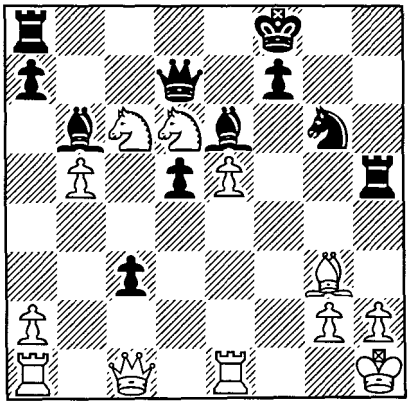
25 fxg3

25 hxg3 h3 looks risky, especially in rapid chess, but I don't see a follow-up after 26 ♕xc3 hxg2 27 ♗e3 d4 28 ♕xd4 and meanwhile White will have an extra couple of pawns.

25...hxg3

25...♗b6+ 26 ♗e3 hxg3 27 ♗xb6 axb6 28 ♕xc3 gxh2+ 29 ♔h1 would bid an end to Black's kingside play, but was perhaps a better option than the game.

26 ♗xg3 ♗b6+ 27 ♔h1



27...♔g7

I'm not sure why no one has suggested 27...d4 as an improvement here, as surely it's useful to keep hold of that c3-pawn. After 28 ♕d1 ♖g5! it's too early to take that pawn on d4, but 29 ♕f3! (29 ♘xd4 ♖xg3 30 hxg3 ♔g7 would turn the tables on White as Black's pieces suddenly coordinate in a massive attack) 29...♖e8 30 ♖ad1 would leave White in complete control.

28 ♕xc3 ♖ah8 29 ♖f1

Black's play down the h-file amounts to nothing and Kasparov just has to play a couple of accurate moves and avoid tricks.

29...♔g8 30 ♖ae1

30 a4 would make sense to get that bishop off the annoying diagonal and thus open the net around White's king.

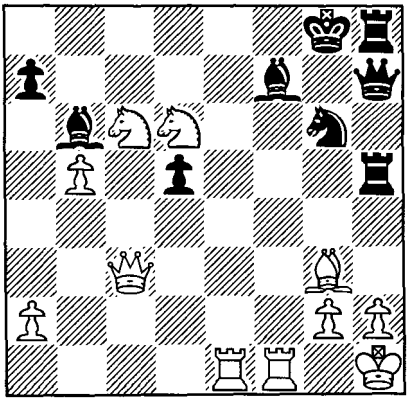
30...f5!?

The move had to be tried to bring another major piece to the h-file.

31 exf6 ♕h7 32 f7+

Palliser and Psakhis both suggest 32 ♘d4 ♖xh2+ 33 ♔g1 as a way to block out Black's bishop, but here Black still has some compensation with 33...♖h4!. The move played in the game is the most accurate, but unfortunately Kasparov doesn't follow up correctly.

32...♗xf7

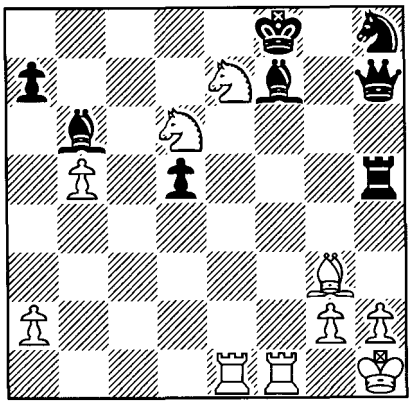


33 ♕xh8+?!

Kasparov sacrifices his queen to get rid of the pressure down the h-file and take over the initiative himself. The extremely hard--to-spot 33 ♗h4!! (clearing the third rank so that the queen controls h3) 33...♖xh4 34 h3 is pointed out instantly by

the computers as completely winning for White.

33...♘xh8 34 ♘e7+ ♔f8



35 ♘ec8?

This loses control and allows Black's pieces some flexibility.

35 ♘ef5! was stronger, keeping the black pieces in the net in the corner when White would have great compensation for the queen.

35...♕d3

35...♗c5!, as pointed out by Psakhis and Palliser, would have amazingly given Black the advantage. After 36 ♖e8+ ♔g7 37 ♗e5+ ♖xe5 38 ♖xe5 ♕d3 Black is starting to take control and will be able to unravel her extra piece.

36 ♖f3 ♕c2?

And this is the losing mistake. The queen had to hit the e1-rook so that 36...♕d2 37 ♘xf7 ♘xf7 38 ♘d6?? would fail to 38...♖xh2+!, although here 38 ♖ef1 must still be better for White.

37 ♘xf7 ♘xf7 38 ♘d6 ♕g6

Polgar is forced to give up her extra queen, since 38...♖h7 39 ♖e8+ ♔g7 40 ♖xf7+ drops everything, but is now left with a lost endgame two pawns down.

39 ♖xf7+ ♕xf7 40 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 41 ♖e5 ♖xe5 42 ♗xe5 d4 43 ♔g1 ♔e6 44 ♗b8 ♔d5 45 ♔f1 ♔c4 46 ♔e2 d3+ 47 ♔d1 ♔xb5 48 h4 a5 49 ♗e5 ♗f2 50 h5 ♗e3 51 ♗g7 1-0

Game 30
S.Rublevsky-Bu Xiangzhi
Ningbo (rapid) 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 d6 4 ♗xc6+ bxc6 5 0-0 ♗g4 6 h3 ♗h5

Instead 6...♗xf3 7 ♕xf3 e6 (7...e5 would transpose to positions examined in the first game of this chapter, Rublevsky-Tiviakov) 8 d3 d5 9 ♘c3 ♘f6 10 ♕g3 g6 11 exd5! cxd5 12 ♘b5 ♘h5 13 ♕c7 ♕d7 14 ♕a5 ♗d6 15 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 16 ♗h6 ♔e7 17 c4! left Black with issues to solve in I.Smirin-F.Berend, Moscow Olympiad 1994.

7 e5!?

The critical test of Black's early ...♗g4. White exploits the fact that Black has 'forgotten' to play ...e5 himself. The line is somewhat risky as we are obliged to move a pawn in front of our king, but I believe it promises White good chances.

7...e6

This is the solid option, but condemns Black to an unpleasant middlegame with his weak c-pawns. Alternatives are:

a) The critical test of White's idea must be 7...dxe5 8 g4 and now:

a1) 8...♗g6 9 ♘xe5 with a further branch:

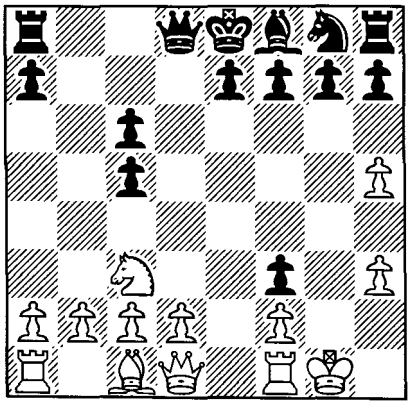
a11) 9...♕d5 10 ♖e1 e6 11 ♘c3 ♕d6 12 d3 ♘f6 13 ♗f4 ♘d5 (S.Kasparov-L.Bregadze, Internet (blitz) 2007) 14 ♘xg6 ♘xf4 15 ♘xh8 ♘xh3+ 16 ♔f1 ♕f4 17 ♘e4 and Black has nothing for the rook.

a12) 9...f6 10 ♘xg6 hxg6 11 ♕f3 ♕d5 was tried in I.Rausis-J.Lopez Martinez, Badalona 2003, and here I think White should keep the queens on with 12 ♕g3 (12 ♕e3!?) 12...f5!? 13 ♘c3 ♕d7 14 d3 ♘f6 15

g5 ♘d5 16 ♘xd5!? cxd5 17 ♗f4 and, although the position is unusual, I think White has an advantage with control of the dark squares.

a13) 9...e6 10 ♖e1 ♗d6 (E.Kulovana-N.Dzagnidze, Dresden 2007) 11 ♕f3 ♕c7 12 d3! ♘e7 13 ♗f4 0-0 14 ♗g3 f6 15 ♘c4 ♗xg3 16 fxg3 e5 17 ♘c3 and again the most relevant aspect of the position is Black's weak c5-pawn.

a2) 8...e4 9 gxh5 exf3 10 ♘c3! is an important nuance, preventing ...♕d8-d5.



White will capture the pawn on f3 next move, resulting in a very unusual-looking position. Of course we'd prefer our h5-pawn back on g2, but the queen on f3 does a good job of keeping our king secure and Black's pieces aren't really in a position to drum up an attack. Meanwhile Black has nowhere comfortable for his king either as if he castles kingside we can try using the g-file. We are hoping that we can target Black's queenside pawns, particularly the vulnerable c5-pawn. If you have read my book on the Grand Prix Attack you will know I like hitting those doubled c-pawns.

This position has been reached a few times, but almost every black player has tried a different move:

a21) 10...♖c8 was a rather passive choice by the Russian Grandmaster in S.Rublevsky-A.Dreev, Moscow 2005, and after 11 ♕xf3 e6 12 d3 ♕f6?! (the queen just gets in the way here and leaves Black a long way behind in development) 13 ♕g3 ♕f5 14 ♖e1! ♕xh5 15 ♖e5 ♕g6 16 ♖g5 ♕f6 17 ♘e4 ♕d8 18 ♖xg7! White had regained his pawn with a large initiative.

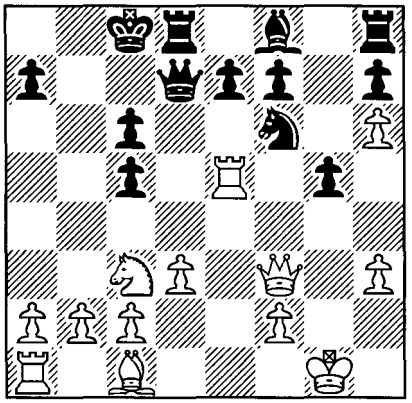
a22) 10...e6 11 ♕xf3 ♕d7 12 d3 ♘e7 13 ♖e1 ♘d5 14 ♘e4 ♗e7 15 ♗d2 ♘f6 16 ♗c3 ♕d5 was M.Schepetkova-L.Stetsko, Voronezh 2010, and now 17 h6! ♖g8 18 hxg7 ♖xg7+ 19 ♔h2 would have picked up material.

a23) 10...♘h6!? 11 ♕xf3 ♕c8 (R.Ovetchkin-M.Al Sayed, Moscow 2006) 12 ♘e4 e6 13 d3 ♘f5 14 ♗e3 would immediately target Black's weak pawn.

a24) 10...♕d7 11 ♕xf3 ♘h6 12 ♘e4 e6 13 d4! ♘f5 14 dxc5 ♘d4 was seen in E.Aranovitch-N.Guliyev, Coubertin 2009, and here White should have continued with 15 ♕d1! with a clearly better position, the idea being that 15...f5 can be met by 16 ♗e3.

a25) 10...♘f6 has been tried the most often, leading after 11 ♕xf3 ♕d7 12 d3 to a further divide:

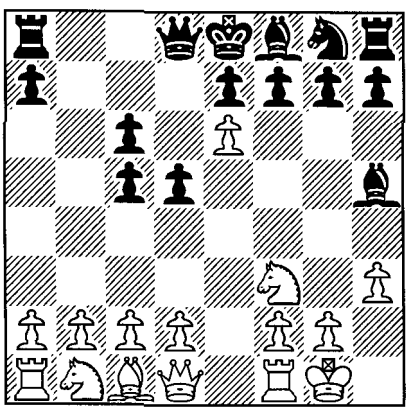
a251) 12...g6 13 h6 g5 14 ♖e1 0-0-0 15 ♖e5!



15...g4 16 hxg4 ♕xg4+ 17 ♕xg4+ ♘xg4 18 ♖xc5 ♔b7 19 ♖h5 ♖g8 20 ♔f1 e6 21 ♗f4 ♖g6 22 ♔e2 ♗xh6 23 ♗xh6 ♘xh6 24 ♖ah1 ♘f5 25 ♖xh7 and White was a clear pawn up in R.Mamedov-Y.Kuzubov, Lubbock 2009.

a252) 12...♘d5 was suggested by Vigorito. After 13 ♘e4 e6 I think White should try 14 c4!?, fixing the c5-pawn on a dark square and thus as a constant weakness: 14...♘b4 15 ♗e3 ♘c2 (or 15...♘xd3 16 ♖ad1 0-0-0 17 ♘g5 ♘e5 – 17...f6? 18 ♖xd3 ♕xd3 19 ♕xc6+ ♔b8 20 ♘xe6 is decisive – 18 ♕e4 ♕xd1 19 ♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 20 ♔g2 ♗d6 21 ♘xf7! and White has a great advantage) 16 ♖ac1 ♘xe3 17 ♕xe3 and White is on top.

b) 7...d5 has also been tried a few times, but this allows 8 e6!, a pawn sacrifice more often seen in the Caro-Kann.



Here 8...fxe6 9 g4 (9 ♖e1 ♕d6 10 d3 ♘f6 11 ♘bd2 is also possible) 9...♗f7 10 ♘e5 ♕d6 was V.Nevednichy-I.Chirila, Cluj 2008, when 11 d4! cxd4 12 ♕xd4 ♕c7 13 ♘d2 ♘f6 14 ♘df3 would have left White with a complete bind. Black will permanently have a bishop out of play, as the only way to activate the f8-bishop is with ...g7-g6 when the f7-bishop will be hemmed in.

8 exd6 ♗xd6 9 d3

So Black has developed fairly actively, but he has a weakened queenside.

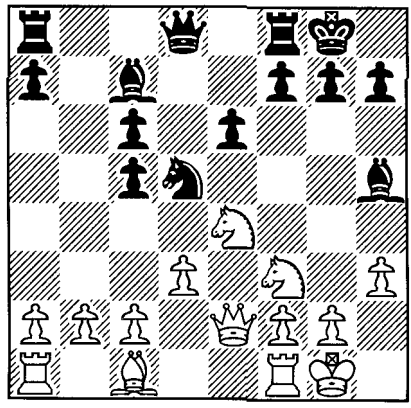
9...♘f6

9...♘e7 was tried the first time this position was reached in A.Shirov-B.Gelfand, Dortmund 2002. The Latvian continued 10 ♘bd2 0-0 11 ♘e4 ♘d5 12 ♖e1 ♖e8 when 13 g4!? ♗g6 14 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 15 h4 h6 (15...f6 16 h5 ♗f7 17 ♘d2 is a little better for White) 16 ♘e5 ♗h7 17 g5 hxg5 18 hxg5 looks very promising.

10 ♘bd2 0-0 11 ♕e2 ♘d5 12 ♘e4

12 ♘c4 ♗c7 13 g4 ♗g6 14 ♘fe5 is an alternative approach which I imagine will receive some practical tests should this line continue to garner interest at the top level. It's dangerous playing with the pawns advanced in front of your king, but here the knights are dominating the bishops so our king should be safe.

12...♗c7!



13 c4?!

This is the right idea, but the wrong execution. The critical try here is 13 g4 ♗g6 14 ♘xc5 (14 c4 ♘b4 15 ♖d1 ♕e7 16 a3 ♘a6 17 ♗g5 f6 18 ♗h4 is also an interesting approach) when the key question is whether Black can drum up sufficient play against the white king in return for our pawn advantage: 14...♗b6 15 ♘e4 ♕c7 (15...f5 16 ♘eg5 is nothing to worry about) 16 d4

♖ad8 17 c3 and I'd say White has decent chances to convert his extra pawn, although the position is messy. Practically I would probably go for 12 ♘c4 which is safer in my view.

Note too that 13 ♘xc5? fails to 13...♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 ♕d6.

13...♘b4 14 ♖d1

Perhaps Rublevsky intended 14 g4 here, but suddenly realized that 14...f5! 15 gxh5 fxe4 16 dxe4 ♘c2! was rather risky.

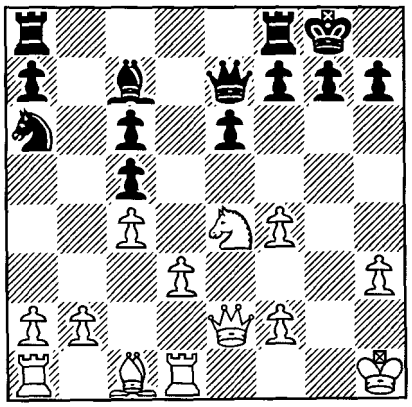
14...♗xf3 15 gxf3

Very risky, but 15 ♕xf3 ♘c2 16 ♖b1 f5! would give Black the better prospects as the knight has a great square on d4.

15...♘a6?!

The game is rapid, so naturally the players don't play the most precise moves. Here active play with 15...♕h4! 16 ♔g2 f5! 17 ♘xc5 ♖f6 would have left Rublevsky regretting his 15th move.

16 f4 ♕e7 17 ♔h1



The position is very complex now. Both sides' pawn structures are compromised and White would have big difficulties should that black knight manage to find its way to d4. Luckily at the moment it's right out of the game on a6. Meanwhile the Russian can hope to utilize the semi-open g-file. I think it is still easier for White to play, as Black struggles to get his knight into the game while White has a simple plan of developing his pieces and pressuring g7.

17...♖ad8 18 ♖g1 f5

This move gives away too many squares. Black should have tried jumping his knight back into the position with 18...♘b4! 19 ♖g3 ♖fe8 20 a3 ♘d5! when the endgame after 21 cxd5 exd5 22 ♕g4 f5 23 ♕xf5 dxe4 24 ♕xe4 ♕xe4+ 25 dxe4 ♖xe4 26 ♗e3 should be drawn.

19 ♘g5 ♖f6 20 a3

Keeping the black knight from joining the rest of its army.

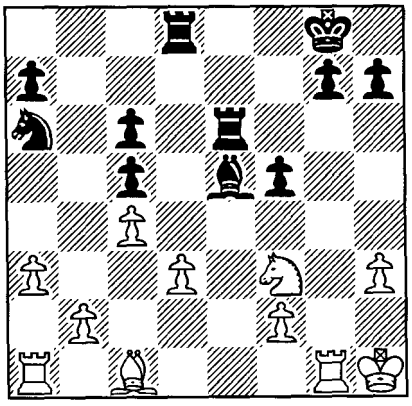
20...e5?!

This gives White an edge. Better was 20...♕d6, but after 21 ♗d2 h6 22 ♘f3 ♕xd3 23 ♖ae1 White has good compensation as he has taken over the initiative.

21 fxe5

Rublevsky should have started with 21 ♗d2! as there's no rush to decide matters in the centre. Black could try 21...e4, but 22 dxe4 h6 23 ♘f3 ♕xe4 24 ♖ae1 looks very promising for White with his play down e- and g-files.

21...♕xe5 22 ♕xe5 ♗xe5 23 ♘f3 ♖e6



24 ♘xe5

After this the position drifts towards a draw. 24 ♖e1 was the last chance to keep

an edge: for example, 24...♖de8 25 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 26 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 27 ♗e3 and Bu Xiangzhi would have had to play accurately for the half-point.

24...♖xe5 25 ♗f4

Black retakes the initiative after this move. 25 ♗e3 ♖xd3 26 ♖ad1 ♖xd1 27 ♖xd1 would have been more sensible, with decent compensation for the pawn and in fact the better practical chances.

25...♖e2 26 ♔g2

26 ♖ae1! ♖xf2 27 ♖e7 ♔f8 28 ♖gxg7 ♖xd3 29 ♖gf7+ ♔g8 30 ♖g7+ ♔f8 would have been an amusing draw.

26...♖xb2 27 ♖ae1 ♖b7 28 ♖e6 ♖xd3 29 ♖xc6 ♖xa3 30 ♖d1 ♘b4

30...♖a4 should have been tried when Black is better with his extra couple of pawns, although White is active enough to have good drawing chances.

31 ♖d8+ ♔f7 32 ♖xc5 ♘d3 33 ♖xf5+ ♔e6 34 ♖ff8 ♘xf4+ 35 ♖xf4 ♖c7 36 ♖e8+ ♔d6 37 ♖d8+ ♔e6 38 ♖e8+ ♔d6 39 ♖d8+ ½-½

Game 31
V.Zvjaginsev-T.Asensio Lisan
Barbera 1996

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6

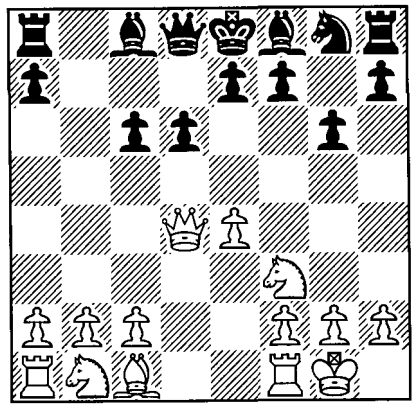
3...d6 4 ♗xc6+ bxc6 5 0-0 g6 would be the normal move order in this chapter, although it's useful to know we could also reach this position via our 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 repertoire.

4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 0-0 d6

5...♗g7 would of course be the normal move here and we'll see more of it next chapter.

6 d4! cxd4 7 ♕xd4

This is the reason that 5...g6 is not very common (after 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘c6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 0-0). Here Black has to make a concession to close the a1-h8 diagonal.



7...f6

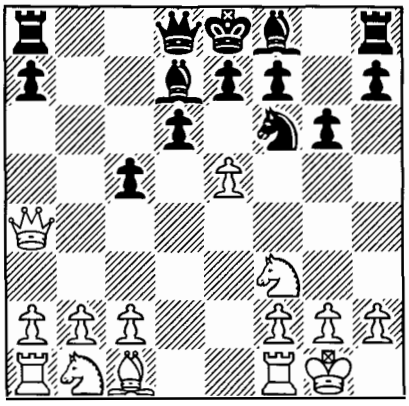
The ugliest way to deal with the threat, but probably the best practical try:

a) 7...e5 8 ♕d3 leaves Black with the problem that ...e5 and ...g6 don't combine, as now either the h6-square or the d6-pawn will become exposed:

a1) 8...♕b6?! 9 ♗e3! ♕xb2 (9...♗a6 10 c4 ♕xb2 11 ♘bd2 ♕b4 12 ♖ab1 ♕a5 13 ♖b3 ♕c7 14 ♖a3 ♗c8 15 c5! also looks terrible for Black; true he has netted a pawn, but he is so far behind in development that he's really going to suffer) 10 ♘bd2 ♕b5 11 ♘c4! d5 12 exd5 ♗a6 (12...cxd5 is obviously not an option because of 13 ♘d6+, while 12...♕xd5 13 ♕c3! f6 14 ♖fd1 ♕e6 15 ♘d6+! is not attractive either) 13 ♕c3! ♕xc4 14 ♕xe5+ ♗e7 15 ♕xh8 0-0-0 16 ♕xh7 ♕xd5 17 ♖fe1 ♗b4 18 ♗g5 f6 19 ♕xa7 was crushing in D.Marciano-C.Roche, Clermont Ferrand 2001.

a2) 8...♕c7 would be safer, but White held a pleasant edge after 9 c4 h6 10 ♘c3 ♗e6 11 b3 ♗e7 12 ♗b2 ♖d8 13 ♖ac1 ♘f6 14 ♘d5! In S.Prudnikova-L.Drljevic, Belgrade 2003. This pawn structure in general favours White as Black will find it too hard to break with ...d6-d5.

b) 7...♘f6 might seem the most logical move, but 8 e5! compromises Black's pawn structure and after 8...c5 (8...dxe5 9 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 10 ♘xe5 ♔e8 11 ♘xc6 simply wins a pawn) 9 ♕a4+ ♗d7 White has a pretty pleasant choice:



b1) 10 ♕h4 dxe5 11 ♘xe5 ♗f5 12 ♘c3 ♗g7 (K.Kerek-J.Bordos, Eger 1999) 13 ♖e1! ♕c7 (13...0-0 14 ♘c6) 14 ♕a4+ ♔f8 15 ♗f4 looks exceedingly unpleasant for Black.

b2) 10 ♕a3!? looks like an interesting option too: for example, 10...dxe5 (10...♘d5 is asking for trouble after 11 exd6 exd6 12 ♘c3) 11 ♘xe5 ♗g7 12 ♘c3 (12 ♕xc5 ♘g4 13 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 14 h3 ♘e5 15 ♘c3 ♖c8 16 ♕e3 ♘c4 leaves Black with enough compensation that a draw is likely) 12...0-0 13 ♕xc5 ♘g4 14 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 15 ♖d1 ♕c8 16 ♕xc8 ♖fxc8 leaves Black with some compensation for the pawn, but it will be an unpleasant struggle to hold the half-point.

8 ♖d1

8 h3!? could also be considered, preventing Black's next, as well as ideas of ...♘h6-g4.

8...♗g4

Or 8...♘h6 9 h3 (9 ♕c4 ♕b6 10 ♘d4 ♘f7! – 10...c5 11 ♘e6 ♘g4 12 ♘c3 ♘e5 13 ♕d5 and White's knight on e6 gives him the advantage – 11 ♕xc6+ ♕xc6 12 ♘xc6 ♗b7 13 ♘d4 ♗xe4 14 ♘c3 ♗b7 15 ♘e6 ♖b8 16 ♘b5 also looks more pleasant for White) 9...♕b6 10 ♕c3 (10 ♕d3 ♗g7 seems more or less okay for Black) 10...♗g7 11 ♗e3 c5 12 a3 0-0 13 b4 f5 14 e5 and White's queenside play promises him the advantage.

9 ♕d3

The most natural way to defend the knight, but White has an interesting alternative in the shape of 9 ♕a4!? with the idea 9...♕b6 (9...♕d7 10 ♘bd2 should also be a little better for White) 10 ♗e3 ♕b5 11 ♕xb5 cxb5 12 ♘c3 with a great queenless middlegame in prospect as Black's queenside pawns are rather weak.

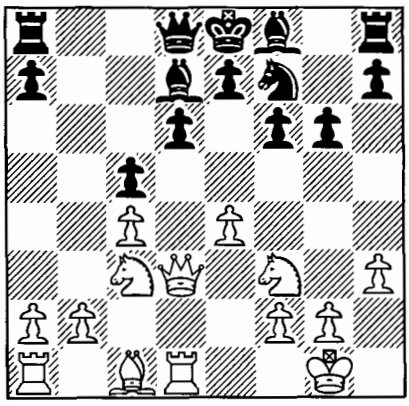
9...♘h6 10 h3 ♗d7

A slightly strange choice, retreating, but 10...♗xf3 11 ♕xf3 ♘f7 12 c4 ♗g7 13 c5 gives White the advantage without any danger.

11 c4 c5

11...♗g7 12 c5 would be awkward for Black.

12 ♘c3 ♘f7



13 ♘d5

A nice-looking move, but this doesn't really achieve anything. It was better to play on the queenside with 13 ♗e3 ♗g7 14 a3 a5 (14...0-0 allows White to choose between 15 b4 and 15 ♗xc5!?, both with an

edge) 15 b4 axb4 16 axb4 ♖xa1 17 ♖xa1 cxb4 18 ♘d5 0-0 19 ♖a7! and White has a promising initiative.

13...♗g7 14 ♗d2 0-0 15 ♗c3 ♘e5?!

I think this is the start of a mistaken plan. Black needs to keep the knight to support his d6-pawn. 15...e6 16 ♘e3 ♗c6 would leave a roughly balanced position.

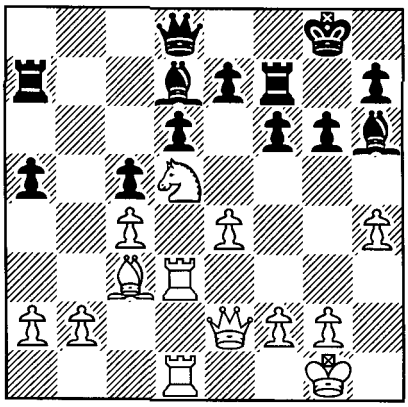
16 ♕e2

16 ♘xe5 fxe5 17 ♗d2! h6 18 ♗e3 would have given White a pleasant advantage, as he could start his queenside proceedings while Black's g7-bishop is blocked out of play, and 16 ♗xe5!? fxe5 17 a3 also looks good for White.

16...♘xf3+

16...♘f7! would still have been fine for Black.

17 ♕xf3 a5 18 ♕e2 ♖f7 19 ♖d3 ♗h6 20 ♖ad1 ♖a7 21 h4!



The Russian GM comes up with a strong plan exploiting Black's early ...f6, which has left his kingside vulnerable.

21...e6?!

Black cannot get away with this move once he has exchanged knights, but it's hard to sit still when White has started to attack his king.

22 ♘e3

22 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 23 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 24 ♖xd6 must also be good for White, but Zvjaginsev decides not to imbalance the position.

22...♗f4?

I'm not sure what Asensio Lisan missed here as it's obvious the bishop won't be able to defend d6 for long on this diagonal. 22...♗f8 was forced, although White has a great position after 23 h5 e5 24 hxg6 hxg6 25 ♘d5.

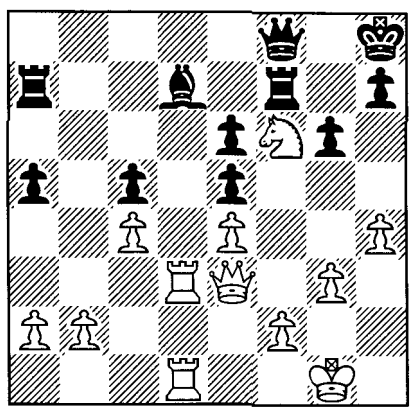
23 g3 ♗e5 24 ♘g4 ♕f8

This allows White a winning tactic. 24...♔h8 was more tenacious, although 25 ♘xe5 (25 f4 ♗xc3 26 bxc3 is sufficient to win a pawn) 25...dxe5 26 ♕e3 ♕c7 27 g4! followed by 28 g5 leaves White with a decisive advantage.

25 ♕e3

25 ♗xe5 dxe5 26 ♘xf6+! wins at once.

25...♔h8 26 ♗xe5 dxe5 27 ♘xf6!

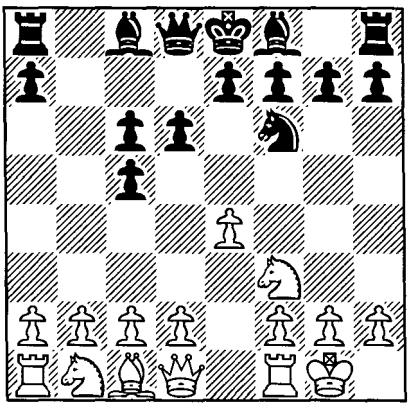


He finds it second time round!

27...♖xf6 28 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 29 ♖xd7 ♕c8 30 ♕d2 1-0

Game 32
N.Somborski-E.Kolbert
Vrnjacka Banja 2008

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘c6 4 ♗xc6+ bxc6 5 0-0 ♘f6?!

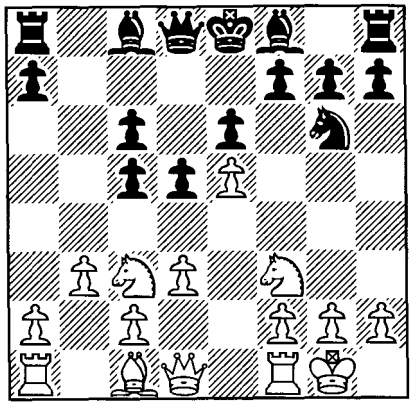


This is a careless mistake which a lot of your opponents are likely to make, thinking it will simply transpose to the first couple of games seen in this chapter. Indeed I made this mistake once and had to suffer.

5...e6 is quite similar and again White should react with 6 e5! d5 (anything else will more or less transpose to the game continuation) 7 d3 ♘e7 8 b3 ♘g6 and then:

a) 9 g3!? ♗e7 10 ♗b2 0-0 11 ♘bd2 ♗d7 12 h4 f6 13 ♖e1 ♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 fxe5 15 ♗xe5 ♗f6 16 f4 ♗e8 17 ♕g4 and White had total control in S.Maze-B.Buehler, Geneva 2005. For a more detailed discussion of playing against Black's doubled c-pawns, see *Starting Out: Sicilian Grand Prix Attack*.

b) I like the look of 9 ♘c3.



It looks strange to put our knight in front of the c-pawn when we want to play c2-c4, but the idea is to first put the knight on a4 to hit the c5-pawn and then fix it with c2-c4: for example, 9...f6 (9...♗a6 10 ♗a3 ♕a5 11 ♘a4 ♗b5 12 ♕e1 ♕xe1 13 ♖fxe1 ♗xa4 14 bxa4 ♗e7 15 ♖ab1 would leave Black in a rather unpleasant endgame, as the c5-pawn will drop within a few moves) 10 ♘a4 fxe5 11 ♗a3 ♗e7 12 ♗xc5 would give White an edge.

6 e5!

It shouldn't come as a surprise that I suggest this move after we have seen Rublevsky-Bu Xiangzhi with 5...♗g4 6 h3 ♗h5 7 e5!?.

6...♘d5

Alternatively:

a) I tried 6...♘g4, but after 7 ♖e1 I felt obliged to play 7...♘xe5 8 ♘xe5 dxe5 9 ♕h5! ♗e6 10 d3 (during the game I was rather concerned about 10 b3 ♕d4 11 ♕xe5 ♖d8 12 ♗b2 ♕xe5 13 ♖xe5, leaving Black in a truly ugly position) 10...g6 11 ♕xe5 ♕d4 and here in R.Hart-G.Jones, Auckland 2009, 12 ♕c7! would have left me with serious problems.

b) 6...♘d7 7 ♕e2 would still force Black to make a structural concession, as 7...d5 8 e6 fxe6 9 ♕xe6 is good for White.

c) 6...dxe5 7 ♘xe5 ♕c7 8 ♖e1 e6 9 ♘a3 ♗a6 10 ♘ac4 ♗e7 11 ♕f3 ♖c8 12 b3 0-0 13 ♗b2 ♖fd8 14 d3 is an instructive set-up to remember; Black's pieces have been completely restrained, T.Oral-M.Rachela, Komarno 1997.

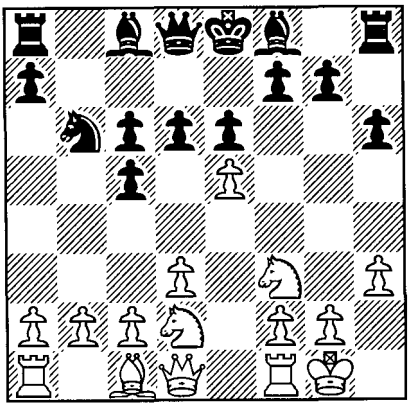
7 h3

Preventing the bishop coming to g4.

7...e6

The bishop on c8 is now left without much future. That said, the bishop is scarcely any better located after 7...♗f5 8 d3 e6 9 ♘bd2 ♗e7 10 exd6 ♗xd6 11 ♘e4.

8 d3 h6 9 ♘bd2 ♘b6



10 exd6!

Of course we don't want to allow Black to keep his structure intact with ...d6-d5. The resulting position is very pleasant for White who can start to put pressure on Black's weak c5-pawn. If we compare the position to Rublevsky-Bu Xiangzhi (Game 30), we can see that we have a big advantage thanks to the light-squared bishop being shut out of play on c8, rather than on h5. Black struggles to find any counterplay here and must endure his lousy position.

10...♗xd6 11 ♘e4 ♗e7

11...0-0 12 ♗e3 f5!? 13 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 would leave Black with weaknesses, but at least then he has a bit of space to himself. White is still clearly better here, however, and after 14 ♖e1 e5 we should play the surprising 15 ♗c1! (15 ♗d2 allows the interesting pawn sacrifice 15...e4! 16 dxe4 fxe4 17 ♖xe4 ♗f5 18 ♖e1 ♖ad8 when White should still be on top, but Black is starting to get some activity) 15...e4 (15...♘d7 is met by 16 ♘xe5! ♘xe5 17 ♗f4 ♖e8 18 ♕e2, picking up a pawn and retaining all the positional pluses) 16 dxe4 ♕xd1 17 ♖xd1 fxe4 18 ♘e5 ♗b7 19 ♗e3 and White has a great endgame.

12 ♘e5!

White's knights take over.

12...♕d5 13 ♗f4 c4

Black's position is already so terrible that this move is practically forced.

13...♗b7 would allow 14 a4! a5 15 c4! ♕d4 16 ♕b3 ♖a6 and I can't imagine any sane player wanting to be Black here. In fact White could win a pawn immediately with 17 ♘f3 ♕d8 18 ♗e3.

14 ♘c3 ♕d4 15 ♕f3 ♗b7 16 ♖ad1!

Energetic play from Somborski who doesn't allow his opponent any time to settle.

16...cxd3

16...0-0 17 dxc4 ♕c5 18 ♘e4 would leave White a pawn up, with continued positional advantages and the start of an attack on the kingside.

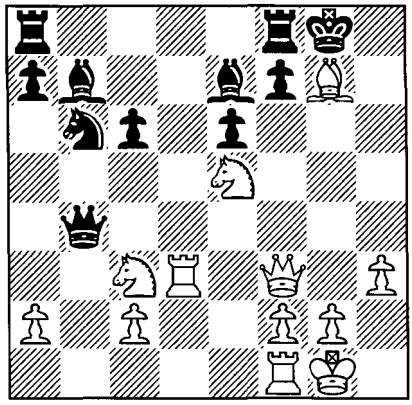
17 ♖xd3 ♕c5 18 b4!

Classic deflection!

18...♕xb4 19 ♗xh6 0-0

An unfortunate necessity; the f7-square needed defending.

20 ♗xg7!



20 ♘e4! was also winning and perhaps the most accurate approach: 20...gxh6 (20...f5 21 ♕g3) 21 ♕f4 ♔h7 22 ♘xf7.

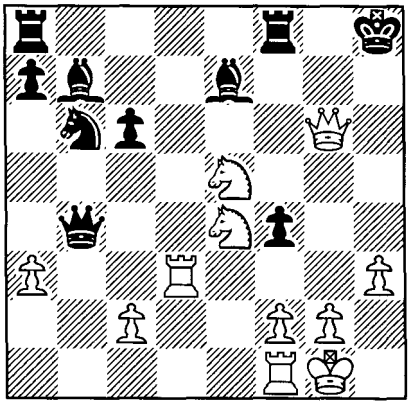
20...♔xg7 21 ♘e4

The knights block out the queen and leave the king defenceless.

21...f5 22 ♕h5 f4

The pawn has to prevent the rook coming to g3: for example, 22...♕xe4 23 ♕g6+ ♔h8 24 ♕h6+ ♔g8 25 ♖g3+ mates.

23 ♕g6+ ♔h8 24 ♕h6+ ♔g8 25 ♕xe6+ ♔g7 26 ♕g6+ ♔h8 27 a3!



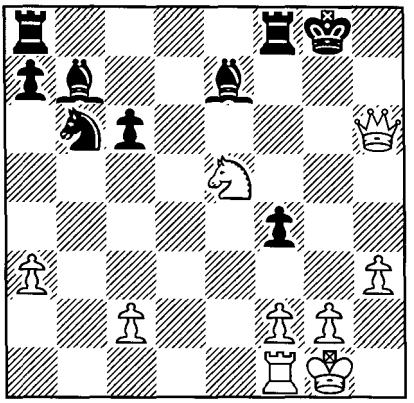
Causing the queen to lose contact with the e7-bishop and the d6-square.

27...♕a4 28 ♖d6!?

Somborski is having fun and indeed White has hundreds of different wins here, including 28 ♘g5 ♗xg5 29 ♕h5+ ♔g7 30 ♕xg5+ ♔h8 (30...♔h7 31 ♖d6 is mate in two) 31 ♖d6 when Black is forced to play 31...♕e4 to prevent an immediate mate, although 32 ♖h6+ ♕h7 33 ♘g6+ ♔g7 34 ♘e7+ still mates very quickly. In fact here the fastest finish would be 31 ♘g6+ ♔g8 32 ♘e7+ ♔f7 33 ♕g6+ ♔xe7 34 ♖e1+ ♕e4 35 ♖xe4 mate.

28...♕xe4 29 ♕h5+ ♕h7 30 ♖h6 ♕xh6 31 ♕xh6+ ♔g8

Materially the position isn't so bad for Black, but unfortunately for Kolbert everything is falling with check while the mate threats haven't disappeared.



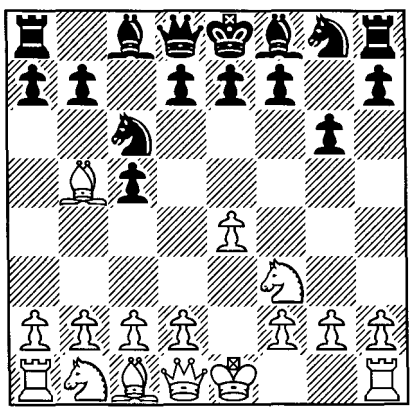
32 ♕e6+ ♔h8 33 ♕xe7 ♗a6 34 ♖d1 ♘d5 35 ♕h4+ ♔g7 36 ♕g5+ ♔h7 37 ♕g6+ ♔h8 38 ♕xc6 1-0

Conclusion

You will face the Hybrid Variation fairly often as it can be reached by two different move orders. This is a more dynamic attempt than the previous couple of chapters; Black takes the structural risk of doubled c-pawns in the hope that he can take the initiative. The topical line examined in Game 30 should be studied carefully, but I believe White has good chances in the unusual positions which arise. It is also important to investigate the aggressive attempts of Games 27-29, although I believe White is doing very well theoretically there too.

Chapter Five
Rossolimo Variation: 3...g6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6



Black's main move in the 3 ♗b5 Sicilian and a fair amount of theory has built up on it, but the plans are still the most important thing to remember.

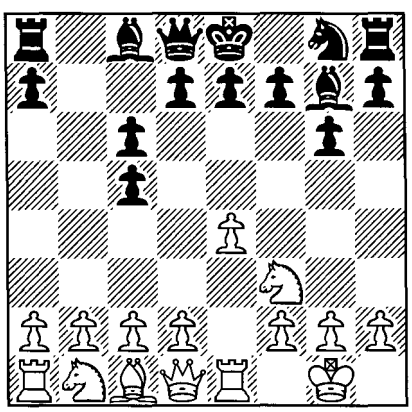
4 ♗xc6

Continuing to follow in Rublevsky's footsteps. Moreover, it's logical to capture on c6 in all our lines because of the transpositional possibilities. Black must now choose how to recapture which will dictate the course of the game.

4...bxc6

This is Black's more aggressive recapture and has similarities to the Hybrid Variation of the previous chapter. 4...dxc6 is the main move and will be looked at in the next chapter.

5 0-0 ♗g7 6 ♖e1



Black has three different main set-ups here. His principal set-up is the unusual ...f6 and ...♘h6 followed by ...♘f7. This looks very passive, but is solid and hard to break down, while Black's position contains some dynamism. This is examined in Games 35 and 36. The second set-up is ...e5, contesting the cen-

tre, which we look at in Game 33. The third is perhaps the most natural looking move ...♘f6, but here White can gain time on the knight with e4-e5 and c2-c4 when the positions look a little like a Scotch to me – see Game 34. The final game of the chapter shows Black's other logical-looking moves.

Repertoire Outline

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 0-0 ♗g7 6 ♖e1

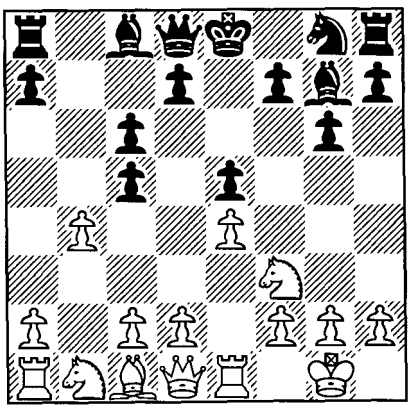
Now:

a) 6...♕b6 was employed by a young Peter Leko, but is extremely rare, 6...e6 has also played only a handful of times, and 6...♕c7 is also played very rarely, but a grandmaster has tried defending Black's position. These tries are all included in the notes to Game 37.

b) 6...d5 is another fairly logical try, but the notes to Game 37 highlight the positional flaws to this move.

c) 6...d6 has been played more often and is the principal line of Game 37, but again 7 e5! promises White a structural advantage.

d) We now move on to the most common plans for Black and start with 6...e5 which has been played over 200 times. However, I fancy White's chances after Fischer's positional pawn sacrifice 7 b4!?.



This can be seen in Game 33.

e) 6...♘f6 has a bad theoretical reputation, but it is probably ill-deserved. I suggest an interesting new plan for White in Game 34.

f) 6...f6 has been played around 100 times and by some quite strong players, but is likely to transpose to variation 'g'. The nuances are explained in Game 35.

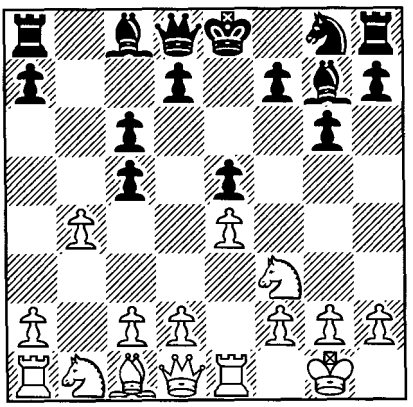
g) Finally, the strange-looking 6...♘h6 is the most common, planning on hiding that knight away on f7 and is looked at in Games 35 and 36.

Game 33
J.Hammer-A.Wirig
Cappelle la Grande 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 0-0 ♗g7 6 ♖e1 e5

Black blocks up the centre and dissuades our plan of opening it up. This is the second most common plan after Black's ...♘h6 and ...f6. However, I like the look of...

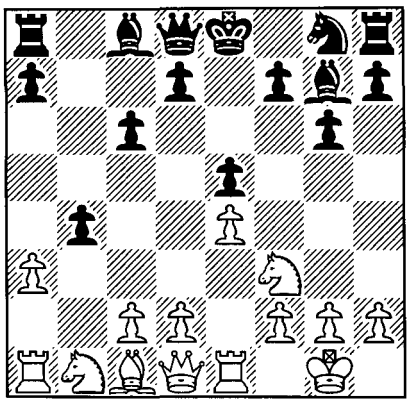
7 b4!?



...a move that Fischer came up with for his return match with Spassky and which was advocated by Richard Palliser in his book. Instead 7 c3 is the main move.

7...cxb4 8 a3

So what exactly does White obtain for his pawn? Should Black capture on a3 then the bishop will control important squares along the long diagonal, particularly d6, while the a-file is also opened up for the a1-rook. Forcing the c5-pawn away also gives White greater play in the centre. Fischer's devotion to chess was legendary and thus any novelty of his should be taken very seriously.

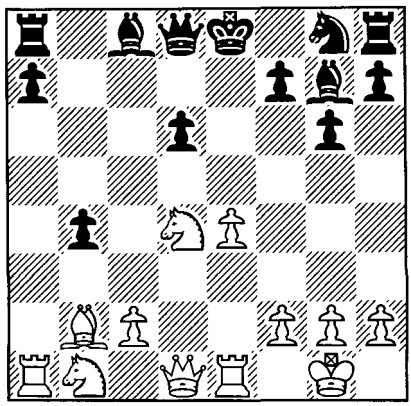


8...♘e7

Wirig doesn't want to see the young Norwegian's preparation, but White now has an advantage with play down the a-file and the greater central control. Others:

a) Black can try to return the pawn for a positional gain with 8...b3, which is a common theme in wing gambits, but White is not forced to take back the pawn and Ftacnik gives the interesting option of 9 ♗b2!? d6 10 d4! ♗g4 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 cxb3 ♕xd1 13 ♖xd1 ♗xf3 14 gxf3, with a very pleasant late middlegame, thanks to the targets on c6 and e5, a useful square on d6 and the better bishop.

b) Upon being confronted by this novelty, Spassky tried 8...c5 9 axb4 cxb4 10 d4 (10 c3!? also looks interesting) 10...exd4 11 ♗b2 d6 (11...♘e7 was tried recently, but 12 ♗xd4 0-0 13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 ♕d4+ f6 15 ♕xb4 won back the pawn and left White clearly better in E.Gaal-M.Csarmasz, Hungarian League 2009) 12 ♘xd4, but this is an extremely difficult position for Black to play:



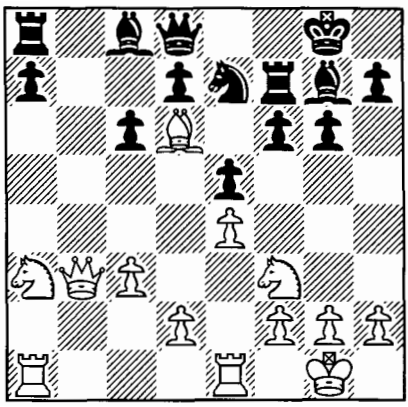
b1) 12...♕b6 13 ♘d2!, as given by Psakhis, looks very strong: 13...♗xd4 (13...♗a6 is the only move given by Psakhis, but he overlooks the powerful rejoinder 14 ♖xa6! ♕xa6 15 ♘e6!, picking up material) 14 ♘c4 ♗xf2+ 15 ♔h1 ♕c5 16 ♘xd6+ ♔e7 17 ♖f1 ♕xd6 18 ♕f3! f6 19 e5 ♕b8 20 ♕xf2 when White has fantastic compensation for the piece and indeed following 20...♗f5 21 exf6+ ♔f7 22 ♕e2 ♗e6 23 ♖a6 ♕c8 24 ♖e1 his pressure will prove decisive.

b2) 12...♘f6 is the other suggestion by Psakhis, but the simple 13 ♘c6 ♕d7 14 ♘xb4 ♖b8 15 ♗c3 regains the pawn and leaves White on top.

b3) 12...♕d7 13 ♘d2 ♗b7 14 ♘c4 (there's no way for Black to parry all of White's threats) 14...♘h6 (14...♘e7 15 ♘f5! and 14...♘f6 15 e5! dxe5 16 ♘xe5 are both completely hopeless) 15 ♘f5! ♗xb2 16 ♘cxd6+ ♔f8 17 ♘xh6 f6 18 ♘df7 ♕xd1 19 ♖axd1 ♔e7 20 ♘xh8 ♖xh8 21 ♘f5+! gxf5 22 exf5+ ♗e5 23 f4 was a very powerful display by the former World Champion,

R.Fischer-B.Spassky, 11th matchgame, Sveti Stefan 1992.

c) 8...bxa3 9 ♗xa3 (the natural recapture, although 9 ♘xa3!? d6 10 d4! exd4 11 e5 dxe5 12 ♘xe5 ♗e6 13 ♕f3 ♘e7 14 ♘xf7! ♗xf7 put the strong grandmaster under pressure in K.Klundt-R.Hübner, Bad Wiessee 1997, which would have been compounded by 15 ♖xe7+! ♕xe7 16 ♕xc6+ ♕d7 17 ♕xa8+ ♕d8 when White can go into a pleasant endgame with an extra pawn after 18 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 19 ♘b5) 9...♘e7 (9...d6 10 d4 exd4 11 e5!, given by Palliser, supplies White with a huge initiative) 10 ♗d6 f6 11 c3 (11 ♘c3 0-0 12 d4! should also be considered) 11...0-0 12 ♕b3+ ♖f7 13 ♘a3 has been analysed by Timman.



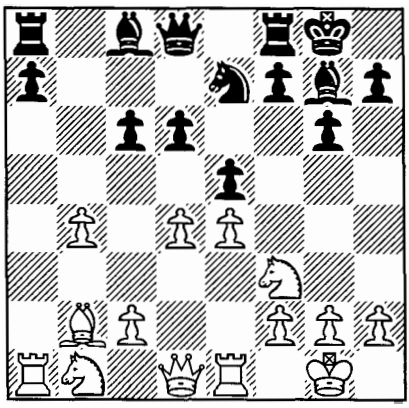
This looks great for White as Black can hardly move.

9 ♗b2!

There's no need to take back the pawn immediately as e5 needs defending.

9...d6 10 axb4 0-0 11 d4

So we have achieved our d2-d4 break, as well as forcing some queenside concessions out of Black. Interestingly this position can also be reached by a slightly different pawn sacrifice (1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 0-0 ♗g7 5 ♖e1 e5 6 b4!?) as occurred in D.Stellwagen-M.Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2005.



11...♕c7

There the (other) strong young Norwegian continued 11...f6!? 12 ♘bd2 (12 ♕d3!? ♗e6 13 ♘bd2 g5 14 ♘b3 looks like an edge too) 12...♗e6 13 c4 g5 when Finkel suggests 14 d5 cxd5 15 cxd5 ♗d7 16 ♘c4 g4 17 ♘fd2 with a clear advantage thanks to White's queenside play. The position resembles a King's Indian where White's queenside play has definitely hit home before Black's respective play on the kingside.

Instead 11...♗g4 12 dxe5 ♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 dxe5 14 ♖a5 left White clearly on top with lots of weaknesses to target in J.Degraeve-S.Renard, Bethune 2001. It's worth remembering that White has regained material equality here.

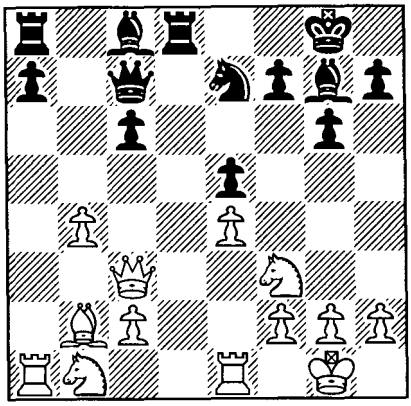
12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♕d3

The first new move, but it doesn't change the assessment that White has a comfortable advantage thanks to Black's structural problems. Previously after 13 ♖a5 ♗g4 14 ♘bd2 ♘c8 15 h3 ♗xf3 16 ♘xf3 f6 17 ♕e2 ♘d6 18 ♘d2 ♖fb8 19 c3 ♗h6 20 ♘b3 ♕f7 21 ♘c5 ♘c4 22 ♖a6 White had succeeded in clamping down on Black's weaknesses in C.Larduet Despaigne-O.Dobierzin, Benasque 2000.

13...♖d8 14 ♕c3!

Forcing ...f6 out of Black who will then

have to worry about the light squares around his king.



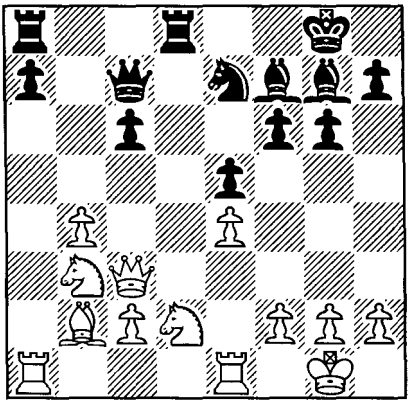
14...f6

14...♖b8 was a more active alternative, although I don't think it changes much after 15 ♖a5 f6 16 ♘bd2.

15 ♘bd2 ♗e6 16 ♘b3

The white knights start to head towards the juicy squares on the queenside.

16...♗f7 17 ♘fd2



The position is extremely difficult for Black to play as he has no targets to play against while White manoeuvres his knights on to perfect squares. If Black does absolutely nothing, White has a plan of ♘d2-c4-a5, ♘b3-c5, and ♗c1-e3 followed by doubling on the a-file when one of a7 and c6 will drop. 17 ♖a6 ♖ab8 18 ♖ea1 ♘c8 19 ♘e1 looked a tempting alternative.

17...♖d7 18 ♘c4 ♖ad8

The rooks do nothing here, so they were probably better where they were. At least then a7 was guarded. Now the rook on d7 will allow the b3-knight in with tempo.

19 ♘ca5

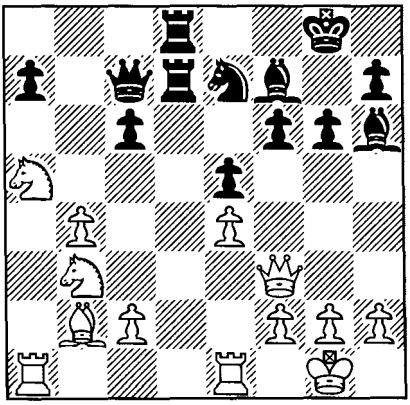
19 ♘c5 ♖d4 20 ♘a5 f5 21 ♕a3 ♖d2 22 ♕a4 was another tempting alternative, which would have left Black's position hanging by a thread.

19...♗h6

Trying to find some activity on the open diagonal but Hammer finds...

20 ♕f3!

...exploiting the en-prise pawn.



20...♗xb3

It's understandable that Wirig didn't feel like allowing 20...♔g7 21 ♘c5 ♖d2 22 ♗c1 ♖xc2 23 ♗xh6+ ♔xh6 24 ♕xf6, but now the light squares around his king become a further problem.

21 ♘xb3 ♖d6 22 ♘c5!

What a square for the knight. Not only does it prevent any liberating thrusts on the queenside, it also supports the white rooks penetrating on the a-file and looks at the e6-square.

22...♔h8 23 ♕b3 ♗d2 24 ♖f1 ♖a8 25 ♘d3!?

25 f4! was the most dynamic route to victory as 25...♗xf4 26 ♖xf4 exf4 27 e5! would have stripped the black king completely bare.

25...♖b8?

Missing White's idea. 25...♗h6 was necessary to cover the dark squares behind the pawns.

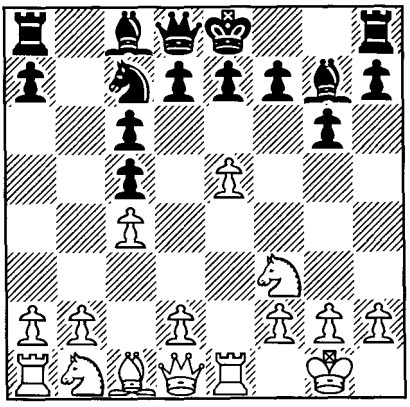
26 ♘xe5! ♖xb4 27 ♕f7 1-0

Game 34
H.Steingrimsson-F.Slingerland
Hilversum 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 0-0 ♗g7 6 ♖e1 ♘f6 7 e5 ♘d5 8 c4

This is the reason 6...♘f6 isn't so popular. Black's knight gets kicked around while White grabs space. However, recently there's been a bit of resurgence of interest. Black hopes to prove that White has overextended and will kick back and open up the position for his bishop-pair. Practical results have remained quite good for White, though, who has good attacking chances.

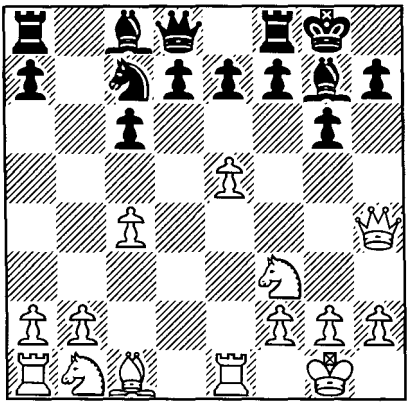
8...♘c7



9 b3!?

An extremely rare move, but it looks sensible if you consider the Scotch Opening. 9 d4 cxd4 10 ♕xd4 is the main line. Black had lost faith after Kasparov beat Salov convincingly but it doesn't seem so clear. Let's have a look:

a) 10...0-0 has been condemned by most annotators, although it's interesting to see that some strong players have recently taken the black side. Of course practically White must have the better chances but the position is not so one-sided after 11 ♕h4.



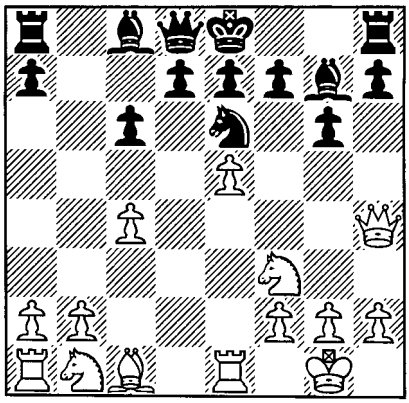
White threatens to win very quickly with 12 ♗h6 and 13 ♘g5. Now:

a1) 11...f6 was Sutovsky's attempted improvement: 12 exf6 exf6 13 ♕d4 (Lane's suggestion of 13 c5?! allows 13...♘e6 when White cannot keep hold of the pawn; 13 ♗h6 g5 14 ♕h5 ♘e6 15 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 16 ♕g4 is offered by Rowson as a little better for White, but the position is extremely complicated and seems okay for Black to me) 13...♘e6 14 ♕d6 f5 and another extremely complicated position had arisen in P.Svidler-E.Sutovsky, Dortmund 2005. It's important to note that White would have a great position were it not for the knight on e6.

a2) 11...d6 12 ♗h6 ♘e6 (12...f6 was tried in a game from 2010 between a couple of grandmasters, but White kept the advantage after 13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 exd6 ♕xd6 15

♘c3 ♘e6 16 ♖ad1 ♕c7 17 ♕e4 ♖b8 18 b3 ♖e8 19 ♘d4 ♘xd4 20 ♕xd4 when Black's structural problems were becoming apparent, A.Pridorozhni-K.Bryzgalin, Dagomys 2010) 13 ♘c3 f6 14 ♗xg7 (14 exf6!? was later suggested by Kasparov as an improvement, but I'm not convinced it was better than the game) 14...♔xg7 15 exf6+ ♖xf6 16 ♘g5 ♘xg5 17 ♕xg5 ♕f8 18 ♖e2 and with that anchor on e6 gone, Black had some issues in G.Kasparov-V.Salov, Dortmund 1992.

b) 10...♘e6 is the other option, leading after 11 ♕h4 to:



b1) 11...0-0 12 ♗h6 is very dangerous: for example, 12...f6 13 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 14 exf6 exf6 15 ♘c3 d6 16 ♖ad1 ♖b8 17 b3 ♖b7 18 ♕f4 ♖d7 19 ♘d4 ♗b7 20 ♘e6 ♘xe6 21 ♖xe6 left White completely dominant in a recent game, L.Drabke-M.Kilic, Hammelburg 2009.

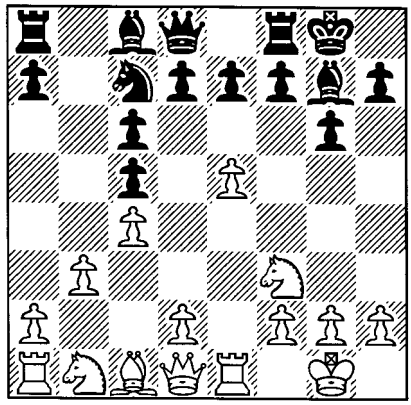
b2) 11...d6!? is an interesting suggestion by Richard Palliser when White should probably continue 12 exd6 (12 ♗h6 ♗xe5! didn't give White enough for the pawn in E.Miroshnichenko-Bu Xiangzhi, Bled 2000) 12...♕xd6 13 ♘c3 h5!? 14 ♗d2 (14 ♗g5!? might be a reasonable try for an advantage) 14...0-0 15 ♖ad1 ♕c7 with a rather complex position; Black's knight on e6 really keeps his position together.

b3) 11...h6 12 ♘c3 d6 13 ♖d1! ♗b7 14 ♗e3 c5 15 exd6 exd6 16 ♕g3, as given by Pedersen, leaves White with dangerous pressure.

The 9 d4 lines are probably critical, but I think Black is doing okay or at least the positions are very messy, so I quite like the Icelandic Grandmaster's 9 b3 for practical games.

9...0-0

9...f5, as played in B.Dombrowski-M.Lewandowski, Gdansk 2007, was a rather strange move adopted in the only other test of 9 b3. Now 10 d4 would make sense, since ...f6 isn't playable, and after 10...cxd4 11 ♕xd4 0-0 12 ♕h4 White has a dangerous initiative.



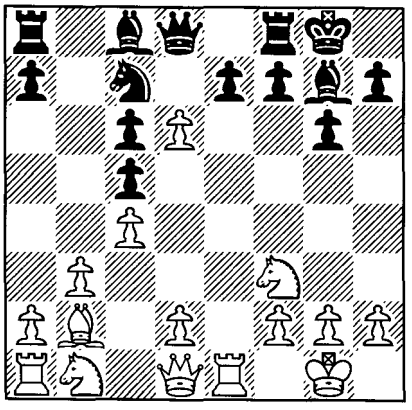
10 ♗b2 d6?!

Slingerland overlooks that White's reply is legal.

If this line is to catch on then I think we will see more of 10...♘e6. I wonder if Steingrimsson wanted to play 11 d4 here: for instance, 11...cxd4 12 ♘xd4 ♕c7 (12...♘xd4 13 ♗xd4 ♕a5 14 c5! would keep Black's bishops blocked in) 13 ♕e2 c5 (13...♗b7 14 ♘xe6 fxe6 15 c5 feels better for White) 14 ♘xe6 fxe6 15 ♘c3 ♗b7 16 ♘a4 ♖f5 17 ♕e3 ♖c8 18 ♖ad1 and White is starting to take

control of the board. An interesting idea is 18...♖h5 19 ♘xc5! ♕xc5 20 ♕xc5 ♖xc5 21 ♖xd7 ♗c6 22 ♖xa7 ♗xe5 23 ♗xe5 ♖cxe5 24 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 25 f3 when the three connected passed pawns look very dangerous.

11 exd6!



Wasn't that bishop pinned?

11...exd6

Instead 11...♗xb2? 12 dxe7 ♕d6 13 exf8♕+ ♕xf8 14 ♘c3 is terrible for Black. 11...♕xd6 was the other choice, but 12 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 13 ♕e2 should favour White as we have that desired structure from the Hybrid Variation with Black's isolated doubled c-pawns.

12 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 13 h3

Preventing ...♗g4, but not really necessary here. 13 ♘c3 would have been the most accurate, as 13...♗g4 14 h3 ♗xf3 15 ♕xf3 ♕d7 16 ♘e4 f6 17 a3 ♘e6 18 b4 looks quite promising.

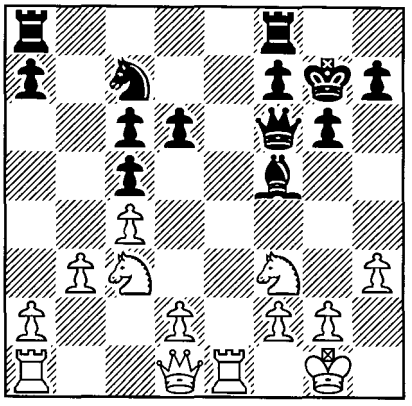
13...♕f6

Black's most accurate move order looks to be 13...♘e6!. Then:

a) 14 d4 cxd4 (14...♕f6?! 15 ♘c3! ♘xd4 16 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 17 ♕f3 will win back the pawn with dividends) 15 ♘xd4 ♕f6 16 ♘xe6+ ♗xe6 17 ♕d2 d5 looks okay for Black.

b) 14 ♘c3 ♘d4 and although White should still have the advantage, the knight on d4 prevents the opening of the position and therefore it won't be so easy to target the d6- and c6-pawns.

14 ♘c3 ♗f5



15 ♖c1

Steingrimsson chooses a slow option, but he shouldn't really have an edge after this. He should have played more dynamically with 15 d4 or even 15 g4!? ♗d7 16 d4 when White will have play against the d6-pawn and therefore a small edge.

15...♖fe8 16 ♖e3 h5!?

16...♖ad8 17 d3 ♖xe3 18 fxe3 d5! would have equalized.

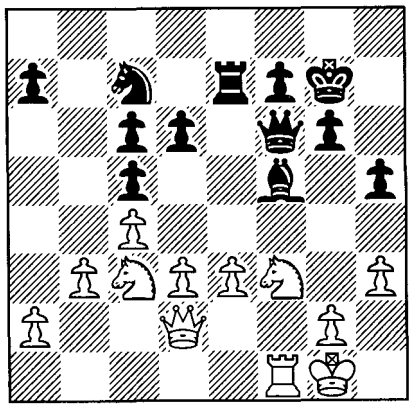
17 d3 ♖xe3 18 fxe3 ♖e8

White takes the edge again after this. Instead 18...g5!? would have tied in with capturing on e3, with decent counterchances on the kingside, although I think with accurate play White keeps the better of it: for example, 19 ♘h2 ♗g6 20 ♕f3 ♕e5 21 ♘d1! ♗xd3 22 ♘f2 ♗g6 23 ♕xc6 ♕e7 24 ♖d1 ♖d8 25 ♘f1 with a continuing complex struggle, but at least White has taken back the initiative while his king is safe thanks to his knights.

19 ♕d2 ♖e7

19...♗xh3 is efficiently met by 20 ♘e4!.

20 ♖f1!



Black is suddenly in trouble as his queen is on the wrong square.

20...d5?!

Slingerland had to give his queen an escape square. However, even after 20...♖e8 White had the strong 21 e4! ♗c8 22 e5! dxe5 23 ♘g5 ♗f5 24 g4 with a clear advantage.

21 e4!

Steingrimsson finds a very strong move, challenging Black's set-up.

21...♗c8

Instead 21...dxe4 22 dxe4 ♗xe4?! (22...♗c8 23 e5 ♖xe5 – 23...♕e6 24 ♘e4 ♕d7 25 ♘d6! ♘e8 26 ♘g5 would allow White a decisive initiative – 24 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 25 ♕f4! isn't much better) 23 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 24 ♘g5 would win material.

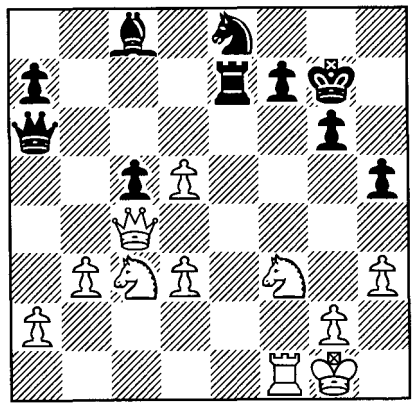
22 cxd5 cxd5 23 exd5

Steingrimsson picks up a pawn and has also gained the useful e4-square for a knight.

23...♕a6 24 ♕f4

24 ♖e1! ♖xe1+ 25 ♕xe1 was the most accurate as the d-pawn will become stronger the fewer pieces left on the board, i.e. 25...♗f5 26 ♕e7 ♕f6 27 ♕xc5 ♘a6 28 ♕d4 ♕xd4+ 29 ♘xd4 ♗xd3 30 ♘c6 and White will easily convert his extra couple of pawns.

24...♘e8 25 ♕c4!



Black cannot hold on to the c5-pawn.

25...♖e3

25...♕a5 was probably the best try, although 26 ♘e4 ♗a6 27 ♕xc5 ♕xc5+ 28 ♘xc5 is objectively just lost.

25...♖c7 leaves the Black king too exposed: 26 ♘g5! ♘d6 27 ♕f4!.

26 ♕xc5 ♕b6 27 ♘a4 ♕xc5 28 ♘xc5

Steingrimsson has succeeded in winning another pawn and now converts without difficulty.

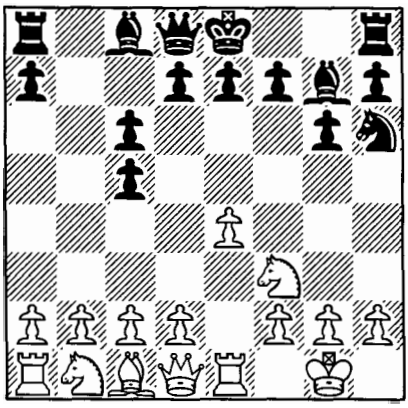
28...♘f6 29 d6 ♘d7 30 b4 a5 31 ♔f2 ♖e8 32 ♖e1 ♖xe1 33 ♔xe1 axb4 34 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 35 ♘e5 1-0

Game 35
A.Morozevich-R.Kasimdzhanov
Wijk aan Zee 2002

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 0-0 ♗g7 6 ♖e1 ♘h6

This slightly strange move is actually the most common. Black's set-up involves ...f7-f6 and ...♘h6-f7. We will take the centre, but Black is solid and we will see a lot of manoeuvring to try and find perfect squares for the pieces. I prefer White as we

have more space and an easier plan of progressing on the kingside, but Black's position should not be underestimated. His position is solid, he has the bishop-pair and there's a lot of latent dynamism just below the surface.



6...f6 7 c3 ♘h6 is the alternative move order, but then we don't have to worry about an immediate 8 h3 as Black's ...d7-d5 isn't so strong once he's already committed to ...f7-f6. After 8 d4 cxd4 9 cxd4 Black has:

a) 9...♘f7 10 b3 0-0 11 ♘bd2 would be another path to the game.

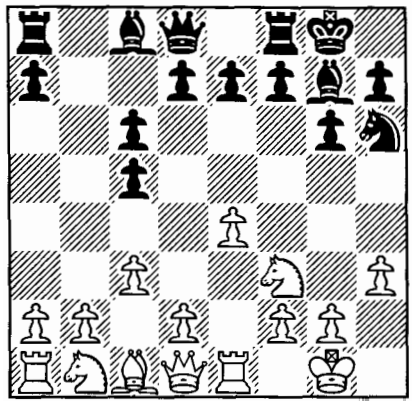
b) 9...d5?! has never been tried, perhaps due to 10 ♕c2 ♕d7 11 ♕c5 ♘f7 12 exd5 cxd5 13 ♘c3 ♗b7 14 ♗f4 ♖c8 15 ♕a3 when Black is caught in an unpleasant bind.

c) 9...0-0 would transpose to the game and, due to the note to White's 8th, below, this might be Black's best move order.

7 c3 0-0 8 d4

The most common, but possibly an inaccuracy.

8 h3! is a more accurate move order according to Pete Wells and seconded by Richard Palliser. Unfortunately we are then committed to h2-h3, but it shouldn't make any major differences to the structure. Importantly, though, this move order does prevent Black's possibility in note 'b' to his 9th move, while it doesn't look like Black has any way to exploit the early h2-h3:



a) 8...d5?! is no longer so attractive: 9 d3! is the point. Black cannot exchange off his c5-pawn and after the ...d7-d5 lunge it will be harder to defend. Then 9...f6 10 ♗e3 c4 11 exd5 leads to:

a1) 11...cxd5 12 dxc4 dxc4 13 ♕e2 ♕d3 14 ♗c5 ♖e8 15 ♘a3 ♕xe2 16 ♖xe2 e5 17 ♖d2 leaves White in control.

a2) 11...cxd3 was tried in S.Rublevsky-Z.Hracek, Polanica Zdroj 1996, when I think White can grab the extra pawn with 12 dxc6!. The pawn on d3 looks annoying, but our c6-pawn is extremely useful: for example, 12...e5 13 b4 ♗e6 14 b5 ♘f5 15 ♗c5 ♖f7 16 ♘bd2 ♕a5 17 ♕b1! ♕xc3 18 ♖c1 ♕a5 19 ♕xd3 and White would be winning.

b) 8...e5 is Black's other independent try, although I think White should be better after 9 d4 exd4 10 cxd4 cxd4 (or 10...d5 11 exd5 ♕xd5 12 ♘c3 ♕c4, as in P.Velicka-J.Zezulkin, Czech League 2004, when 13 ♘e5 ♕xd4 14 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 15 ♘xc6 ♕xd1 16 ♖axd1 is clearly better for White, despite Black's bishop-pair, as c5 is very weak) 11 ♘xd4 f5 (condemned by Gershon who prefers 11...f6 12 ♘c3 ♘f7 13 ♗f4 ♖e8, offering the position as equal, but I think White must have an advantage as he has open

lines for his major pieces: for example, 14 ♘f3 d6 15 ♕a4 ♕c7 16 ♖ac1 ♕d7 17 ♖ed1, taking control) 12 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 13 e5!? ♕b6 14 ♘a3 ♗a6 (14...♕xb2 15 ♘c4 ♕b4 16 ♕b3!? ♕xb3 17 axb3 and despite the pawn deficit White's knights completely dominate the position) 15 ♕a4 ♖ae8 16 ♖ad1 ♖f7 17 ♘c4 ♗xc4 18 ♕xc4 ♕a5 19 e6! dxe6, S.Rublevsky-K.Sakaev, St Petersburg 2001, and although a disaster occurred and White lost in another three moves, at this point he's winning after 20 ♘xc6 ♕c7 21 ♖xe6;

c) 8...f6 9 d4 would reach the typical position and should transpose to lines considered in our next game.

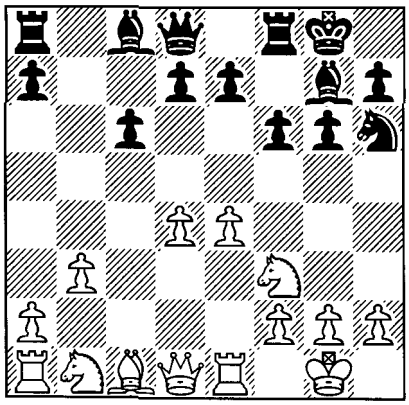
8...cxd4 9 cxd4 f6

Otherwise:

a) Against 9...d6 it would be safest to play 10 h3, transposing into the next game after 10...f6.

b) 9...d5!? is a rare but quite reasonable possibility for Black: 10 e5 f6 11 exf6 exf6 12 h3 g5!? 13 b3 ♗f5 14 ♗a3 ♖e8 15 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 16 ♘bd2 ♘f7 17 ♕f1 ♘d8 gave White nothing special in M.Ulibin-Y.Yakovich, Maikop 1998.

10 b3!?



This is quite unusual. Normally White first develops his knight before deciding where his bishop should sit, but Morozevich has a different idea.

10 ♘c3 is normal and will be considered in the next game.

10...♘f7

Evidently after 10...d6 Morozevich would have continued with 11 ♘bd2 which would have likely transposed. Black could try 11...f5!?, but after 12 ♗b2 (12 ♕c2 ♕c7 13 e5 ♘f7 14 ♗b2 would also have been quite pleasant) 12...fxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♗g4 14 ♘eg5 ♕d7 15 h3 ♗xf3 16 ♘xf3 ♖f5 17 ♕e2 ♗f6 18 ♖ac1 Black had no real compensation for his weak c6- and e7-pawns in R.Leitao-M.Burgos, Americana 2005.

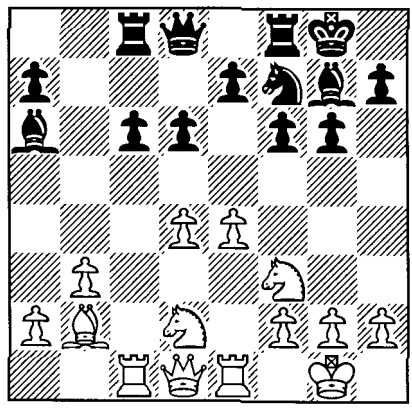
11 ♘bd2 d6 12 ♗b2

Thanks to his set-up, Morozevich has managed to get away without playing h2-h3, although it doesn't make a major different to the position. White's plan is now to put pressure on the c6-pawn. This involves pushing his b-pawn so that the knight can jump to b3 and thence to a5.

12...♗a6

12...♗g4 is generally not very good in any of the 3 ♗b5 systems where White can recapture with his knight and here 13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♘xf3 would just cede the bishop-pair with nothing to show for it.

13 ♖c1 ♖c8



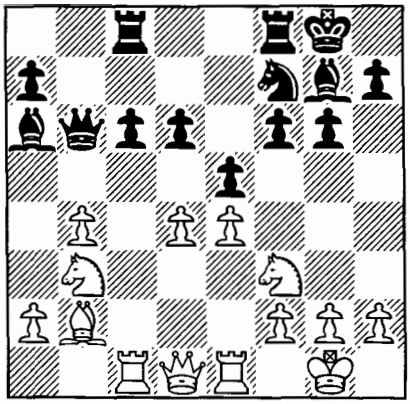
14 b4!

Freeing the b3-square for the white knight and allowing the queen access to a4.

14...e5 15 ♘b3

15 ♕a4! looked tempting to provoke the bishop to a worse square: 15...♗b5 (15...♕b6 16 ♘c4 ♕b5 17 ♕b3 ♕b8 18 h4!? looks quite awkward for Black) 16 ♕b3 when the liberating 16...a5 runs into trouble after 17 a4 ♗a6 18 b5!.

15...♕b6



16 ♗c3

This move feels a little clumsy. Morozevich was evidently worried, though, about 16 a3 ♗b5 17 dxe5 fxe5 18 ♘a5 c5 19 ♗c3 with rough equality.

16...♗c4

Kasimdzhanov had the chance to break out of the bind with 16...exd4! 17 ♘bxd4 ♖fe8 18 ♘b3 c5!, opening the position for his bishops when he shouldn't have any problems.

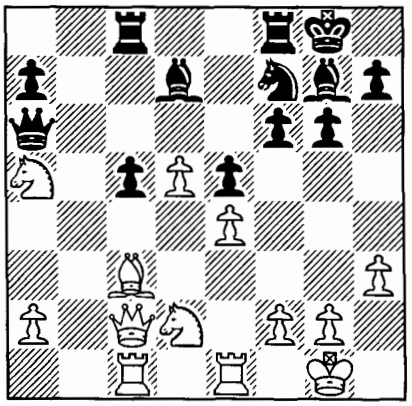
17 ♕c2 ♗e6 18 h3

So it was played anyway!

18...♕a6 19 ♘a5 c5

Black struggles a little after this. In theory it's good for Black to open up the centre with 19...d5!?, but the c5-square has suddenly become a big target which White could exploit with 20 ♘b3 (20 ♘d2 ♗h6 21 ♖cd1 is extremely complicated with such a fluid centre) 20...dxe4 21 ♘c5! ♕xa2 22 dxe5! fxe5 (22...exf3 23 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 24 exf6 wins back the piece) 23 ♕xe4, which would give White very good compensation for the pawn with the far better structure and some useful-looking outposts.

20 bxc5 dxc5 21 d5 ♗d7 22 ♘d2



Now Morozevich has a protected passed pawn and if he can place a knight on c4 then he will have the better chances. Kasimdzhanov is relying on the fact that his knight has a very good square on d6, but perhaps he missed the upcoming tactic.

22...♘d6 23 a4 ♗h6 24 ♖a1 ♔g7 25 ♘dc4!

Morozevich has been preparing this for the past couple of moves. Thanks to the pin on the black queen he is able to exchange off a pair of knights when White will have a comfortable advantage, with the passed pawn supported faithfully by the knight on c4.

25...♘xc4 26 ♕d3 ♖b8 27 ♕xc4

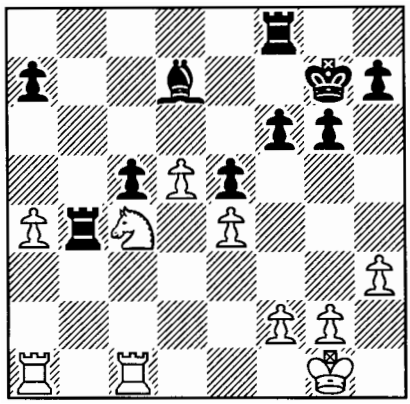
27 ♖a2! would have been a deep nuance. Black still cannot get out of the pin and this would allow greater coordination amongst the white camp, while Black doesn't have a constructive move with which to improve his position.

27...♕xc4 28 ♘xc4 ♖b3 29 ♗d2 ♗xd2 30

♘xd2 ♖b2

Had the rook been on a2, this would of course have been impossible.

31 ♘c4 ♖b4 32 ♖ec1



Temporarily sacrificing the a4-pawn, but c5 and a7 are too weak for Black ever to consolidate.

32...♗xa4

This leaves Black under a lot of pressure. Instead 32...♖xa4? 33 ♖xa4 ♗xa4 34 ♖a1 ♗b3 35 ♘d6! ♖a8 36 ♘b7 is great for White as after 36...c4 37 d6! Black cannot stop the d-pawn, but he should have taken the time to bring his king into the game with 32...♔f7! 33 f3 ♔e7 when Black holds equality.

33 f3

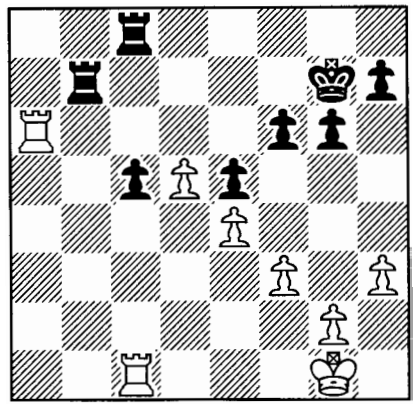
33 ♘d2!? was another interesting try, as after 33...♖c8 34 ♖c4 White regains his pawn with the advantage, such as after 34...♖b2 35 ♖axa4 (35 ♘f1!?) 35...♖xd2 36 ♖xa7+ ♔h6 37 g3.

33...a6

33...♖c8 was necessary to try and defend.

34 ♘d6! ♖d8 35 ♘b7! ♖xb7 36 ♖xa4 ♖c8 37 ♖xa6

White has won back his pawn and holds a clear advantage in the endgame thanks to only having the one pawn island. Black has problems with both the c5- and f6-pawns while he also has to worry about the d-pawn running. Morozevich shows good technique to convert.



37...c4 38 ♖c2 ♔f7 39 ♔f2 ♖bc7 40 h4 c3 41 g4 h6 42 g5 hxg5 43 hxg5 fxg5 44 ♔g3 ♖c4 45 ♖a3 ♔e7 46 ♔g4 ♔d6 47 ♔xg5 ♖8c7 48 ♔f6 ♖c8 49 ♖a6+ ♔c5 50 ♔xe5 g5 51 d6 g4 52 fxg4 ♖e8+ 53 ♔f6 ♖exe4 54 d7 ♖cd4 55 ♖xc3+ ♔b5 56 ♖e6 ♖xg4 57 ♖c7 ♖df4+ 58 ♔e7 ♖g7+ 59 ♔d8 ♖a4 60 ♔c8 ♖a8+ 61 ♔b7 ♖d8 62 ♖b6+ ♔a5 63 ♖d6 ♔b5 64 ♖d5+ ♔b4 65 ♔c6 ♖gg8 66 ♖b7+ ♔c4 67 ♖d1 ♖h8 68 ♔c7 ♔c5 69 ♖b2 1-0

Game 36
M.Adams-T.Dovramadjiev
European Internet Championship 2003

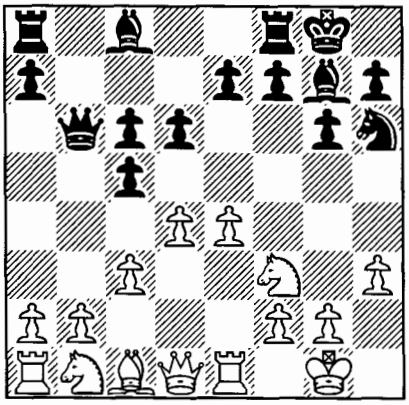
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 0-0 ♗g7 6 ♖e1 ♘h6 7 c3 0-0 8 d4

As explained in the previous game, 8 h3 is a more accurate move order when 8...d6 9 d4 cxd4 would transpose back to the game, while 9...♕b6!? would transpose to the following note.

8...cxd4

8...♕b6!? 9 h3 d6 has been a recent try

for Black and indeed was employed by Ivanchuk last year. Here 9...f6 has also been tried, but after 10 b3 cxd4 11 cxd4 ♘f7 we again have a normal position where we could choose between 12 ♘c3 and 12 ♘bd2, playing like Adams or Morozevich.



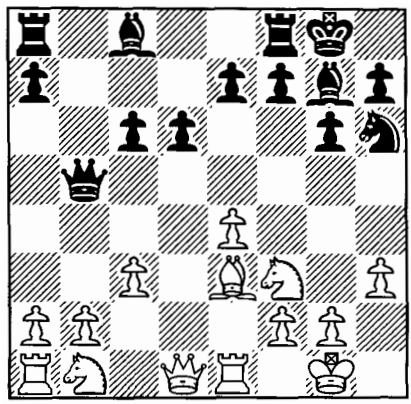
Black's idea is to delay capturing on d4 and thus not give the White knight the c3-square until some concession has been forced out of us. Now:

a) Upon encountering this idea Svidler tried 10 ♕c2, defending the b2-pawn and allowing the bishop to develop to e3. After 10...a5!? (10...f6 11 ♗e3 cxd4 12 cxd4 ♗d7 13 ♘c3 ♘f7 14 ♖ad1 ♕b7 15 ♘d2 ♖ac8 16 ♘c4 f5! 17 exf5 ♗xf5 18 ♕d2 reached a typical position where White had chosen to play ♗e3 rather than ♗b2 in M.Bijaoui-F.Libiszewski, French League 2009 – we'll investigate such an approach briefly in the note to Black's 10th move in our main game) White has:

a1) 11 ♗e3 cxd4 12 cxd4 f5!? 13 ♕d2 ♘f7 (13...fxe4 14 ♗xh6 exf3 15 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 16 ♖xe7+ is extremely dangerous for Black) 14 e5 ♕b4 with a very complex position, but Black seems to be doing fine, P.Svidler-V.Ivanchuk, Nice (rapid) 2010. ;

a2) 11 dxc5!? might be a possible way to exploit Black's move order. Following 11...♕xc5 12 ♗e3 ♕h5 13 ♘bd2 Black's queen and knight are both offside, and an attempt to make them useful with 13...f5!? runs into 14 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 (14...♕xh6 15 exf5 ♗xf5 16 ♕a4 wins a pawn) 15 e5! which looks promising for White.

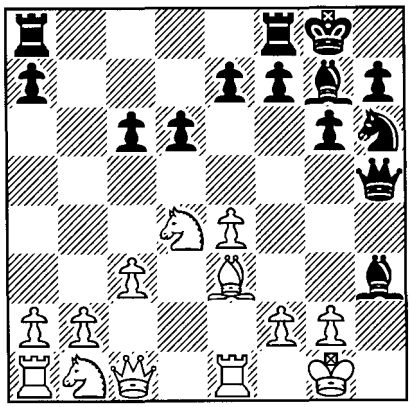
b) 10 dxc5!? has never been played, but strikes me as an interesting attempt to exploit the trapped knight on h6. Then 10...♕xc5 11 ♗e3 ♕b5 (11...♕h5 is the alternative, but I think White has decent chances for an advantage: 12 ♘bd2 f6 – both 12...f5 13 ♗g5! and 12...♕b5 13 b4! a5 14 a4 ♕b7 15 bxa5 ♖xa5 16 ♕c1 also look promising – 13 ♕a4 ♗d7 14 c4 ♘f7 15 c5! with strong queenside pressure) leads to:



b1) 12 ♕d2 ♕h5 13 ♘d4 ♗d7 (13...♗xh3 isn't so strong now the queen is more actively placed on d2: 14 gxh3 ♕xh3 15 ♘xc6 ♘g4 16 ♗f4) 14 ♘e2 f6 and there's no way of trapping the queen as the queen's knight's path to f3 is blocked. White can win the exchange with 15 ♘f4 ♕h4 16 g3 ♕g5 17 ♘e6, but 17...♕h5 18 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 leaves Black with very good compensation.

b2) 12 ♕c1!? causes the game to become extremely sharp. Here 12...♕h5 13 ♘d4 would force Black to find 13...♗xh3! (13...♖e8 14 ♘e2! f6 15 ♘g3 ♕h4 16 ♘d2 wins material, as the queen has run out of

squares), leading to a further divide:



b21) 14 gxh3 ♕xh3 15 ♘xc6 ♕g4+ 16 ♔f1 ♕xe4 17 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 18 ♗xh6 ♕h4 is very unclear.

b22) 14 ♘e2 ♗xg2 15 ♔xg2 when Black has some threats, but I think White can successfully fight off the attack if he plays accurately: for example, 15...♘g4 16 ♖h1 ♕b5 17 ♘d4 ♕d3 18 ♘d2 c5 19 ♕c2 ♘xe3+ 20 fxe3 ♕xe3 21 ♖h3 ♕f4 22 ♖f1 ♕g4+ 23 ♖g3 and the attack has been neutralized.

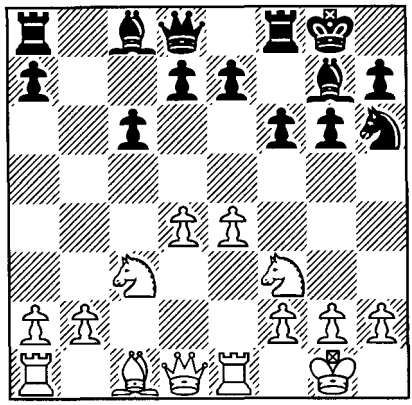
c) 10 b3 was tried in another recent game and appears the most logical. After 10...f6 11 ♗e3 (playing à la Morozevich with 11 ♘bd2 looks sensible) 11...cxd4 12 cxd4 ♘f7 13 ♘c3 Black has tried:

c1) 13...♕b7 14 ♖c1 ♗d7 15 ♘d2 ♖ad8 16 ♘c4 ♕a6 17 ♕d2 e5 18 ♖ed1 was V.Anand-M.Taleb, Dubai (rapid) 2002, when Postny's suggestion of 18...f5 19 dxe5 dxe5 followed by 20 ♗g5! would have left the future World Champion in command.

c2) 13...f5 is a common source of counterplay in this line, but 14 e5 (White's preferred way of combating ...f6-f5) 14...♕a5 15 ♖c1 ♗e6 (tried in E.Safarli-M.Leon Hoyos, Benasque 2010; instead after 15...dxe5 16 dxe5 ♘xe5 17 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 18 b4! ♕xb4 19 ♘d5! ♕b7 – 19...♕d6 20 ♖xc6! is the point – 20 ♗h6 ♗d6 21 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 22 ♘f6! White has a decent initiative) 16 ♗f4 ♖fe8 17 ♖e3 White is in control.

Finally, we can return to 8...cxd4:

9 cxd4 f6 10 ♘c3

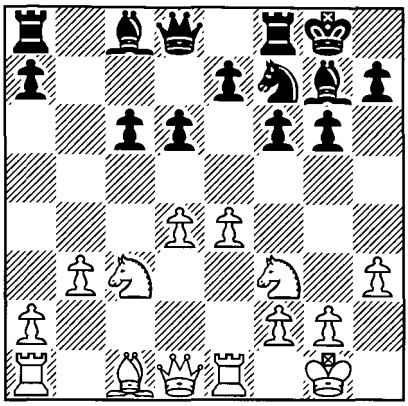


Deviating from the previous game, but as this position can be reached by so many different move orders I think we need to have a look at this approach.

10...♘f7

10...d6 11 h3 ♘f7 12 b3 would be another route to the same position. Here 12 ♗e3 is the other way of playing, dissuading ...c5. This does give added force to Black's ...f6-f5 break, but after the 12...♗d7 (12...♕b6 13 b3 would transpose to note 'c' to Black's 8th move, above) 13 ♖c1 (leaving the d2-square available for the knight on the way to c4) 13...♕a5 14 ♘d2 f5 (14...♕b4 15 b3 f5 has been seen a couple of times when perhaps White should play the knight back with 16 ♘f3 fxe4 17 ♘xe4 when he can start to put pressure on the e7-pawn) 15 e5! dxe5 of R.Ruck-P.Acs, Hungarian League 1999, I like the look of 16 dxe5 when 16...♘xe5?! fails to 17 ♘b3 ♕d8 18 ♗d4 ♘f7 19 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♘c5 ♗c8 21 ♕xd8 ♘xd8 22 ♖xe7+, leaving White in total control – just look at that knight on c5! Here 16...♗e6 is stronger, but 17 f4 would attempt to clamp the bishop on g7 out of the game.

11 b3 d6 12 h3



This is the critical position of the 4...bxc6 variation, and can be reached by many different move orders, as we have already seen.

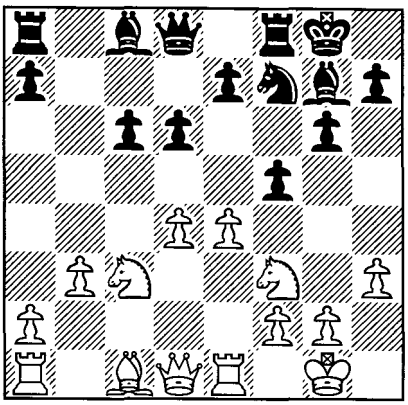
12...♗d7

By no means forced:

a) 12...♕a5 has been tried a few times, with the idea of activating the queen: 13 ♗d2 ♕h5 (this looks like the only logical follow-up, although now Black has to be careful he doesn't get his queen trapped; 13...♕a6 is rather illogical and 14 b4 ♗d7, as in A.Zubarev-D.Kryakvin, Vladimir 2006, and then 15 b5! cxb5 16 ♘d5 threatens both 17 ♘xe7+ and 17 ♘c7 when White regains the sacrificed pawn with the better chances) 14 ♘e2! ♕b5 15 ♖c1 and Black's queen manoeuvre had achieved nothing in the game A.Pridorozhni-B.Shovunov, Elista 2001.

b) Fighting for the centre with 12...e5 has also been tried from time to time: 13 dxe5 fxe5 14 ♗a3 ♕a5 15 ♘a4 ♖d8 16 ♕c2 left White with a comfortable position with pressure against both c6- and d6-pawns in S.Vega Gutierrez-M.Rodriguez Costa, Formigal 2002.

c) 12...f5 is given as the critical response by Palliser.



Then:

c1) 13 e5 would be ideal, but 13...dxe5 14 dxe5 (14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 dxe5 ♕xd1 16 ♘xd1 ♗e6 is probably okay too for Black) 14...♕xd1 15 ♘xd1 c5 16 ♗b2 ♗b7 17 e6 ♘d8 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♘e5 ♖f6 20 ♘c3 gave White reasonable compensation for the pawn, with some decent squares for his knights, but probably no more than that in E.Lobron-Y.Yakovich, Saint Vincent 2000.

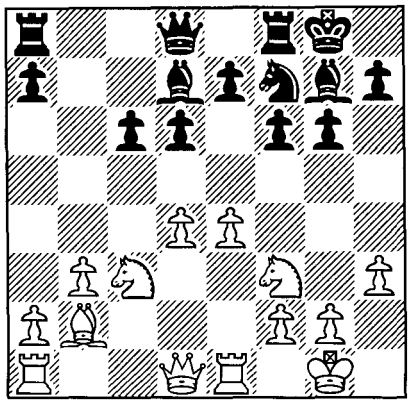
c2) Therefore 13 ♗b2 should be tried when 14 e5 is on the cards, so Black plays 13...fxe4 14 ♘xe4 and now:

c21) 14...♗d7 was tried in S.Arkhipov-Y.Yakovich, Elista 1994, when Arkhipov says he should have played 15 ♕d2! to prevent the black queen entering the position. His line continues 15...♕b6 (or 15...a5 16 ♖e2 a4 17 b4 followed by doubling on the e-file), but here instead of 16 ♖e2, I like the look of 16 ♘c5! as 16...dxc5 (16...♗xh3 fails to 17 ♘a4) 17 dxc5 ♕c7 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♖xe7 ♖ad8 20 ♖d1 would win back the piece with interest.

c22) 14...♕a5 15 ♘ed2 ♖e8 16 ♕e2 (16 ♘c4 ♕d5 17 ♘e3 ♕h5 18 ♖b1!? was suggested by Arkhipov, with the idea of breaking through with d4-d5) 16...♗d7 17 ♘c4 ♕d5 was later seen in G.Airapetian-Y.Yakovich, Voronezh 2008, when White

could have tried 18 ♘e3 ♕a5 19 d5!? cxd5 20 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 21 ♖ad1, regaining the pawn as after 21...e6? 22 ♕b2+ ♔g8 23 ♘g4 the threat of ♘g4-f6+ would be decisive.

13 ♗b2



This position is given as equal in some places, but most analysts are of the opinion that White has a slight advantage. We have developed our pieces sensibly and have control of the centre. Black is rather passively placed, but will try to activate himself with either ...f6-f5 or ...e7-e5. In the meantime we want to bring our knight around from f3 to c4, followed by either targeting Black's queenside or breaking in the centre, depending on which set-up Black employs. Indeed, we should remain flexible so that we can easily deal with whichever plan he chooses. In any event, everyone agrees that this position is much easier for White to play.

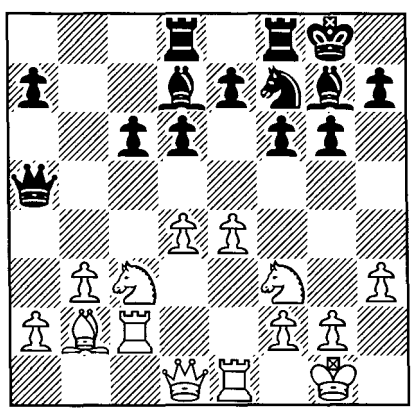
13...♖b8

A somewhat passive approach. It's not immediately obvious to me what the rook is doing on b8, but perhaps Black was simply trying to develop all his pieces. He can also consider:

a) 13...♖e8 14 ♕c2 ♕a5 15 ♖ad1 ♕h5 was a very aggressive attempt by Black, immediately threatening 16...♗xh3, but after the 16 ♘e2 g5 of M.Turov-R.Ponomariov, Kharkov 2001, we should follow Gershon's recommendation with 17 ♘g3 ♕g6 and here perhaps 18 ♕d3 is the most accurate, keeping control of the position.

b) 13...♕b6 was tried in an early game in the variation, S.Rublevsky-S.Iskusnyh, Maikop 1998, but here Mr ♗b5 could have exploited the fact that the d7-bishop is undefended, with 14 e5! ♗c8 15 exd6 exd6 16 d5 c5 17 ♘e4, obtaining a positional advantage in a structure that perhaps most resembles a Benoni.

c) 13...♕a5 14 ♖c1 ♖ad8 15 ♖c2!? was an interesting idea by the English Grandmaster, preparing for Black's ...f6-f5 break when it will be possible to double on the e-file, hitting the e7-pawn.



J.Speelman-J.Shaw, British League 2000, continued 15...♖fe8 16 ♘d2 ♕g5 17 ♖e3 f5 18 ♘f3 ♕h5 19 exf5 ♗xf5 20 ♖ce2 when White had an advantage thanks to his pressure down the e-file. The Scottish GM must have miscalculated something here, however, as he tried 20...♗h6? and after 21 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 22 ♖xe7 ♗xh3 23 ♘e4! ♔f8 24 ♖xa7 (24 ♘f6! ♕f5 25 d5 ♔xe7 26 ♘d4 would have been a flashy but accurate finish: 26...♕g5 27 ♘xc6+ ♔f8 28 ♘xh7+ drops

the queen) 24...♗g4 25 ♘f6 ♗xf3 26 ♕e1 1-0.

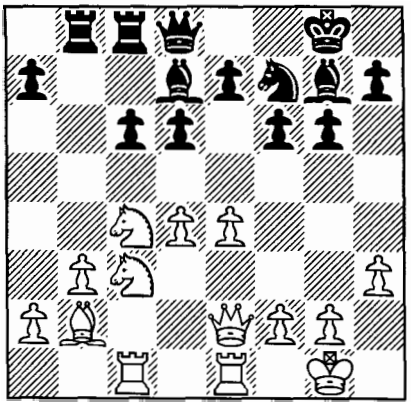
14 ♖c1 ♕a5 15 ♘d2

Adams brings his knight round to the c4-square.

15...♖fc8 16 ♘c4 ♕d8

Black evidently wants to play on the queenside, but as we have no weaknesses there it's not clear what shape that play might take. Moreover, as Black's pieces are now on the queenside, Adams now finds a strong method of breaking through in the centre.

17 ♕e2



17...c5

Consistent with Black's previous moves, but this allows White a strong pawn bind in the centre. However, it's difficult to offer Black any improvements:

a) 17...f5?! 18 exf5 ♗xf5 19 g4! ♗d7 20 ♕xe7 wins a pawn as 20...♗xd4 can be met by 21 ♘xd6!.

b) 17...e5 is another typical break, but Black's rooks aren't on ideal squares here. Perhaps the most thematic way of dealing with it would be 18 ♖ed1 ♗e6 19 d5 cxd5 20 ♘xd5, leaving Black in a very ugly position.

18 d5

18 dxc5 ♖xc5 19 f4! would leave White with a pleasant position as Black's pieces, particularly the knight on f7, lack squares.

18...a6?

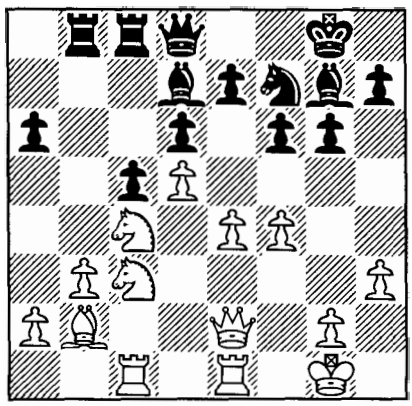
This is probably the decisive mistake. Dovramadjiev had to try activating his knight with 18...♘e5! when:

a) I would be tempted by 19 f4!? anyway, although the position after 19...♘xc4 20 bxc4 ♕a5 is of course a better version than the game for Black.

b) 19 ♘xe5 fxe5 20 ♘d1 a5 21 ♘e3 a4 gives Black reasonable counterplay.

c) 19 ♘e3 ♗h6 prevents f2-f4 when Black would have reasonable counter-chances.

19 f4!



Taking control over the e5-square. The position reminds me of a Benko Gambit, but it is obviously not a great version for Black as he is struggling to find counterplay on the queenside. If Black does nothing White can casually prepare for the e4-e5 break, while h3-h4-h5 is also an interesting idea.

19...♗b5 20 ♘xb5!?

An interesting choice, repairing Black's pawn structure and giving Black play down the a-file, but Adams has decided he can parry that easily and believes his play on the kingside will be very powerful. 20 ♘d1

was the alternative, preparing ♘de3 cementing the knight into place, but Black could then get some counterplay with 20...a5 21 ♘de3 a4. Instead, though, 21 ♘c3!? ♗a6 22 ♖c2 looks to keep everything under control.

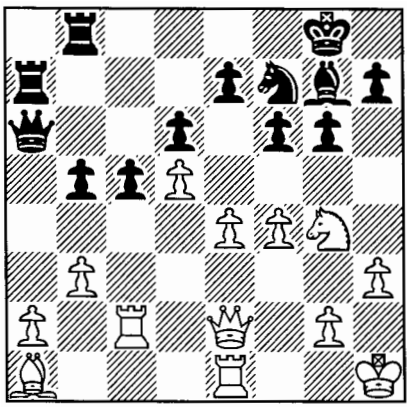
20...axb5 21 ♘e3 ♕a5 22 ♗c3 ♕a7

Of course Black would rather not play 22...b4, ceding the c4-square, after which 23 ♘c4 ♕a7 24 ♗a1 ♖a8 25 ♖c2 would have stopped all of his queenside counterplay.

23 ♔h1 ♖a8 24 ♖c2 ♖cb8 25 ♘g4 ♕a6 26 ♗a1

26 e5 fxe5 27 fxe5 b4 would hold on for Black. White wants to keep queens on to make his kingside attack more powerful.

26...♖a7



27 e5!

After some preparatory moves Adams finally strikes in the centre.

27...f5

Black tries to keep the position closed. 27...fxe5 28 fxe5 dxe5 29 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 30 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 31 ♕xe5 would have left Black with an exposed king, not to mention vulnerable c5- and e7-pawns.

28 e6!

The pawn on e6 cuts through the heart of Black's position.

28...♘d8

I think Black probably missed White's next. 28...♗xa1 was the other try, but 29 exf7+ ♔xf7 30 ♘h6+! ♔g7 31 ♘xf5+ gxf5 32 ♖xa1 looks extremely unpleasant with such an exposed king.

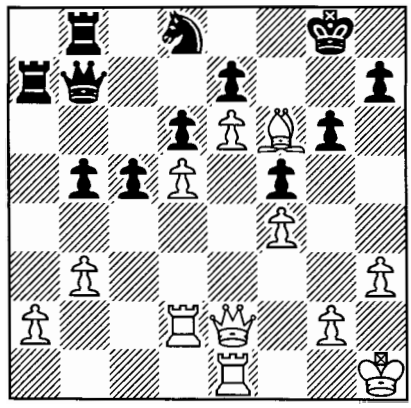
29 ♘f6+! ♗xf6

29...♔h8 30 ♘d7 ♖bb7 31 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 32 g4! would give White a decisive attack.

30 ♗xf6 ♕b7

30...exf6 31 e7 ♘f7 32 e8♕+ ♖xe8 33 ♕xe8+ ♔g7 34 ♖ce2! wouldn't survive long either.

31 ♖d2!



31...exf6

Dovramadjiev can't live with such an exposed king, so decides to give up the exchange, but the endgame is completely lost. However, I don't think Black was going to survive for long anyway. His knight on d8 can scarcely move and I can't see a way to defend Black's monarch: for example, 31...♕c7 32 ♗a1 ♕a5 33 g4! fxg4 34 hxg4 ♕b4 35 ♕e3 ♖c7 36 ♗c3 ♕a3 37 ♕h3 with mate shortly.

32 e7 ♘f7 33 e8♕+ ♖xe8 34 ♕xe8+ ♔g7 35 ♕c6!

Adams correctly evaluates the endgame as won.

35...♕xc6 36 dxc6 ♖c7 37 ♖e8 b4

37...♖xc6 38 ♖b8 b4 39 ♖b7 followed by

♖d2-e2-e7 would be equally hopeless.

38 ♖de2! ♖xc6 39 ♖2e7 d5 40 ♖d7 c4 41 bxc4 dxc4 42 ♖ee7 c3 43 ♖xf7+ ♔g8 44 ♖g7+ ♔f8 45 ♖xh7 ♔g8 46 ♖he7

46 ♖dg7+ ♔f8 47 ♖c7 would have been the simplest.

46...♖c8 47 ♖e1 ♖a8 48 ♖b7 1-0

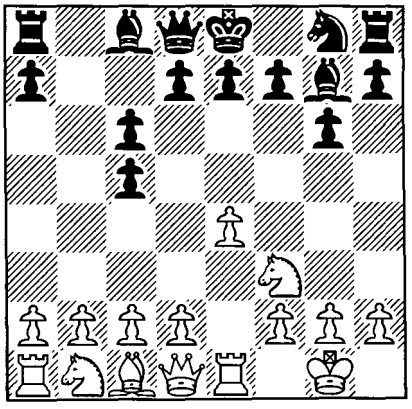
Game 37
A.Pridorozhni-A.Shorokhov
Russian Team Championship 2009

To conclude coverage of 4...bxc6, we will have a look at Black's other 6th-move alternatives here.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6

This game actually started 2...d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘c6 4 ♗xc6+ bxc6 5 0-0 g6 and thus White missed the chance to play 6 d4!, as in Zvjaginsev-Asensio Lisan from the last chapter.

3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 0-0 ♗g7 6 ♖e1



6...d6

Practice has also seen:

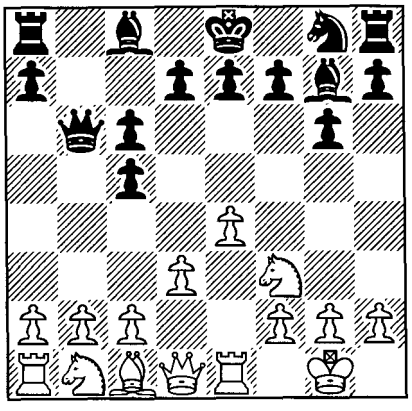
a) 6...d5 is a fairly sensible-looking move, but the problem is that the c5-pawn can no longer be defended by another pawn and thus is a chronic weakness. A recent game continued 7 d3 h6 8 ♘c3 ♗e6 when in D.Campora-S.Medina Carrasco, Seville 2010, 9 e5! g5 10 ♘a4 ♕a5 11 b3 would have already granted White a massive advantage.

b) 6...♕c7 is a speciality of the Armenian Grandmaster Kotanjian, but his results have been very poor. 7 h3 d6 8 c3 has been reached three times in his games, but he has scored just 0.5/3. In his most recent game he tried the aggressive 8...f5, but following 9 exf5 ♗xf5 10 d4 cxd4 11 ♘xd4! e5 12 f4!? (12 ♘xf5 gxf5 13 c4! also looks comfortable) 12...♘e7 13 fxe5 dxe5 14 ♘xf5 ♘xf5 15 ♘d2 ♘d6 in B.Macieja-T.Kotanjian, Martuni 2007, White's most accurate would have been 16 ♕b3! when Black's lack of king safety coupled with his terrible pawn structure would have left him with severe problems.

c) 6...♕b6 was the choice of a young Leko:

c1) Bologan chose 7 ♘a3 ♗a6 8 d3 ♘f6 9 ♘c4! ♕c7 10 e5 ♘d5 11 ♘d6+! ♔f8 12 ♘e4 d6 13 c4! ♘b6 14 exd6 exd6 15 ♗f4 and White was winning, V.Bologan-C.Troyke, Dresden 1996.

c2) However, I don't think Black is really threatening to take on b2, so 7 d3!? followed by 8 ♘bd2 looks sensible.

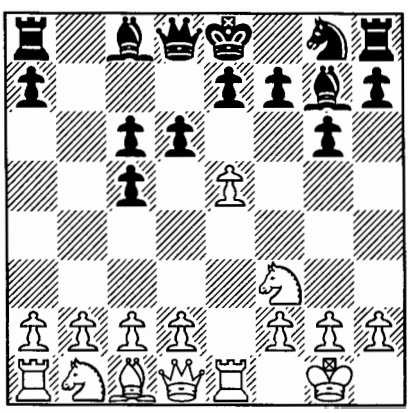


Then 7...♗xb2 8 ♗xb2 ♕xb2 9 ♘bd2 ♘f6

(9...♕g7 10 e5! ♘h6 11 ♘e4 will regain the pawn with total control) 10 ♖b1 ♕xa2 11 ♕c1 ♕e6 12 e5 ♘d5 13 ♘e4 leaves Black really struggling.

d) 6...e6 has been tried from time to time, but again this leaves Black with permanent problems with his c5-pawn as ...d7-d6 can always be met by e4-e5: 7 d3 ♘e7 8 e5 (in P.Royset-E.Carlsen, Tromsoe 2008, 8 ♘bd2 d5 9 c4 0-0 10 ♕c2 d4 11 e5 f6 12 exf6 ♗xf6 13 ♘e4 was also good enough to be virtually winning out of the opening against the sister of the world no.1) 8...0-0 9 ♘c3 ♕b6 10 ♘a4 ♕a5 11 b3 f6 12 ♗a3 fxe5 13 ♗xc5 ♕d8 14 ♗d6 left White in complete control in J.Timman-C.Gamarra Caceres, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1978. Black tried grabbing the exchange with 14...e4 15 dxe4 ♗xa1 16 ♕xa1 but didn't survive long: 16...h6 17 ♘e5! ♔h7 18 ♕c3 ♘g8 19 ♗xf8 ♕xf8 20 ♖e3 1-0.

7 e5!



This won't come as a surprise to those of you who have read the last chapter. We are playing strategically against Black's doubled c-pawns and trying to leave c5 as a chronic weakness.

7 h3 ♘h6 (7...e5!? is an alternative plan for Black) 8 c3 0-0 9 d4 would transpose to positions seen in the last game.

7...♘h6

Again there are alternatives:

a) 7...d5 has been Black's most-common response. Here I like the rare 8 c4!?. The idea is to fix Black's c-pawns and thus create a sitting target. As far as I can tell, it has only been played once, in P.Quiros Cueto-C.Fernandez Velasco, Oviedo 2004. That continued 8...♗g4 9 h3 ♗xf3 10 ♕xf3 e6 11 b3 ♘e7 when 12 ♗a3 ♕b6 (12...♕a5 13 ♕c3! ♕b6 14 cxd5 also wins a pawn) 13 ♘c3 ♕a5 14 ♘a4 ♕xd2 15 ♘xc5 leaves White firmly in control.

b) 7...♗g4 was once essayed by Yakovich, but doesn't look convincing: 8 exd6 ♕xd6 9 h3 ♗f5 10 ♘a3 ♘f6 11 ♘c4 ♕c7 12 d3 0-0 13 ♗e3 ♘d7 was V.Fedorov-Y.Yakovich, Munich 1992, when White could have put Black under real pressure with 14 ♕d2 ♖fe8 15 ♗h6 ♗f6 16 ♗f4 e5 17 ♗h2, since 18 g4 is a threat, picking up the e5-pawn.

c) 7...♗e6 has also been tried, but doesn't seem to change much: 8 ♘c3 ♘h6 (8...d5 9 ♘a4 ♕a5 10 b3 would already be rather uncomfortable for Black) 9 d4! 0-0 (9...cxd4 10 ♘xd4 leaves Black with no good moves) 10 dxc5 dxc5 11 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 12 ♗e3 c4 13 ♗c5 ♘f5 was C.Maier-I.Rausis, German League 1992. Here the straightforward 14 ♖ad1 leaves Black with a wrecked pawn structure.

8 exd6 ♕xd6 9 d3

We've seen this type of positions before in the last chapter. Black is significantly worse due to his doubled c-pawns and White has a basic plan to target the c5-pawn.

9...♗e6

This doesn't really help, but 9...0-0 10 ♘bd2 ♕c7 11 ♘b3 picks up the c5-pawn.

10 ♘bd2 ♕c7

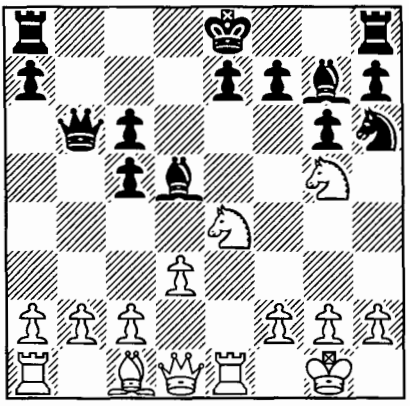
Black is forced into contortions to save the pawn.

Perhaps 10...♗d5 was his initial idea, but 11 ♘g5! ♘f5 12 ♘ge4 ♗xe4 13 ♘xe4 ♕e5 14 ♗g5! would leave him with problems. The immediate threat is ♘e4-f6+ and 14...♕xb2 15 ♖b1 ♕d4 16 g4! ♘h6 17 c3 ♕d8 (17...♕d5? 18 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 19 ♘f6+) 18 ♘xc5 would leave him with no good way to defend e7.

11 ♘e4 ♕b6 12 ♘fg5

Strong and logical, but 12 ♗xh6! ♗xh6 13 ♘fg5 would force Black to give up his dark-squared bishop and 13...♗xg5 14 ♘xg5 ♗d5 15 b3 leaves Black structurally lost.

12...♗d5



13 ♘d6+

Very tempting, but this loses time. Instead after 13 ♘g3! Black still wouldn't be able to castle as 14 c4 is too strong a threat. Thus he must try 13...c4, but 14 ♕e2! ♕b4 15 dxc4 ♗xc4 16 ♗d2 ♕c5 17 ♘5e4 ♗xe2 18 ♘xc5 ♗g4 19 ♖e4 ♗c8 20 ♖ae1 would leave White with an overwhelming position.

13...♔f8 14 ♘de4

White starts to drift over the next few moves and lets Black back into the game. 14 ♘c4 ♗xc4 15 dxc4 ♘f5 16 c3 was safer, when White would still have a clear advantage.

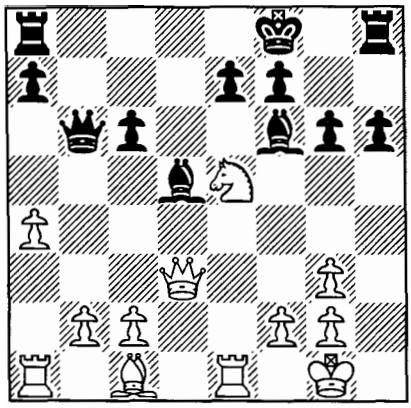
14...♘f5 15 a4?! c4!

Black has successfully got rid of his main problem. The isolated queenside pawns are still an issue and it will take a while to sort out his king, but Black has the bishop-pair at least as some compensation.

16 ♘g3 ♘xg3

16...♗d4! 17 ♕d2 ♘xg3 18 hxg3 cxd3 19 c3 ♗f6 20 ♕xd3 ♔g7 would leave Black with a reasonable position.

17 hxg3 h6 18 ♘f3 cxd3 19 ♕xd3 ♗f6 20 ♘e5!



Pridorozhni gets back on track. Black only needs one more tempo to consolidate his position, but White plays aggressively.

20...♖d8

20...♔g7?! is not yet possible because White has 21 c4 ♗e6 22 ♘xg6!.

21 a5 ♕c7 22 ♗f4 ♕c8 23 ♕e2

23 ♘xg6+! was strong: 23...fxg6 24 ♕xg6 h5 (24...♗g7? isn't possible due to 25 ♖xe7!) 25 ♗h6+ ♖xh6 26 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 27 ♕xh5 and White's rook and three pawns should be more than a match for Black's bishop-pair.

23...♔g7 24 ♘g4!?

A good practical try. White gives up his b2-pawn for some dangerous threats.

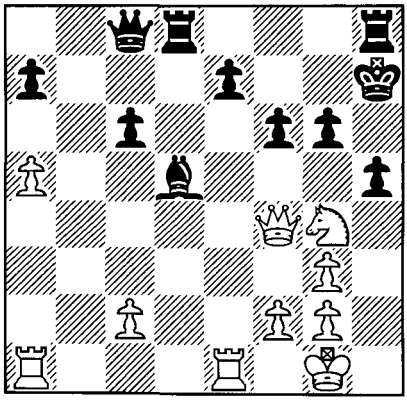
24...♗xb2 25 ♗e5+ ♗xe5 26 ♕xe5+ ♔h7 27 ♕f4 h5?!

27...g5! was the correct way of parrying White's threats when it's doubtful he objectively has enough for the pawn.

28 ♘e5 f6?

The decisive mistake. Black misses the cunning switchback. However, 28...♖hf8 29 c4 ♗e6 30 ♘f3 would have left White with ongoing threats.

29 ♘g4!



Now e7 is en-prise with check and thus Shorokhov can't deal with both that threat and that of ♕f4-h6+.

29...♕d7

29...♖d7 was the best hope, but 30 ♕h6+ ♔g8 31 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 32 ♘xf6! exf6 33 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 34 ♕g6+ ♔f8 35 ♕f5+ ♔g7 (35...♔g8 36 ♖e7!) 36 ♕g5+ ♔f8 37 ♖ab1!, with ideas of ♕g5-e5 and ♖b1-b8, looks too strong for Black to deal with.

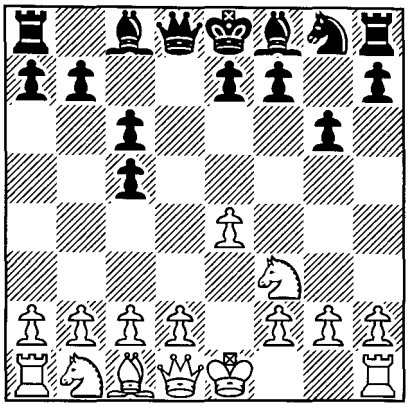
30 ♕h6+ ♔g8 31 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 32 ♘xf6 1-0

Conclusion

4...bxc6 is much less common than the 4...dxc6 of the following chapter. Capturing towards the centre is better strategically, but as we have seen, Black has problems developing his pieces to active posts and the c5-pawn will again be a long-term problem for him. We can take hold of a short-term initiative, which with accurate play should grant us promising chances.

Chapter Six
Rossolimo Variation: 3...g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6



This is the main move. Black is probably slightly worse after it, but is solidly placed and 4...dxc6 has been played more than twice as often as 4...bxc6. This is the most mainstream part of our repertoire and all of the illustrative games in this chapter are since 2004, with three from 2010. Indeed, over the past few years there have been many important theoretical debates in the Rossolimo. This is partly due to the fact that White players don't feel comfortable taking on the Sveshnikov and the other Open Sicilians, and thus have switched to 3 ♗b5 in search of an advantage.

5 d3

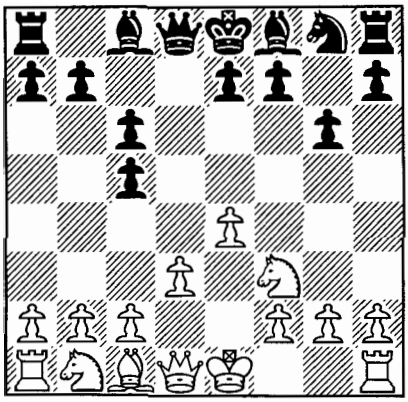
White intends to develop quickly and put pressure on Black's queenside, notably the c5-pawn. We have a structural advantage and intend to use it. Compared to the previous chapter Black can, though, develop his pieces easier. Indeed, the plan with c2-c3 and d2-d4 isn't so effective here, as Black can put more immediate pressure on the centre. On the other hand, as Black has captured away from the centre we have a greater strategic advantage.

Game 38 examines the main line against which I'm opting for a plan of a3 and b4. This theme is continued in Game 42. Instead Games 39 and 40 show how we can castle long and get a swift kingside attack against Black's slower plans, while Game 41 covers a topical set-up, but the strong Israeli Grandmaster Emil Sutovsky shows that Black's position is very dangerous. Finally, in the last two games of the chapter we examine lines which allow us a positional pull.

Repertoire Outline

This chapter is the most theoretical in the repertoire, but I've still tried to show a comprehensive list of the various possibilities here.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 d3



5...♗g7

A sensible move and by far the most common. Others:

a) 5...b6 is rare here, but is likely to transpose to other lines and after 6 0-0 ♗g7 7 h3 play has transposed to Game 43.

b) 5...f6?! is another rare move that was once tried by the strong Polish Grandmaster Michal Krasenkow, but is unlikely to be repeated – see Game 45.

c) 5...♕c7 is another offbeat alternative covered in Game 45.

d) The immediate 5...♘f6 is an unusual move order, but 6 h3 ♗g7 simply transposes to the main line.

e) 5...♗g4 has been tried reasonably frequently, including by some strong grandmasters, but is rather an unambitious try and Game 45 shows how White can get a risk-free edge.

6 h3

Ruling out any notion of ...♗g4.

6...♘f6

This has been played around twice as often as 6...e5 and was the choice of none other than Garry Kasparov (who has played this position with both colours), but as well as 6...e5, Black also has:

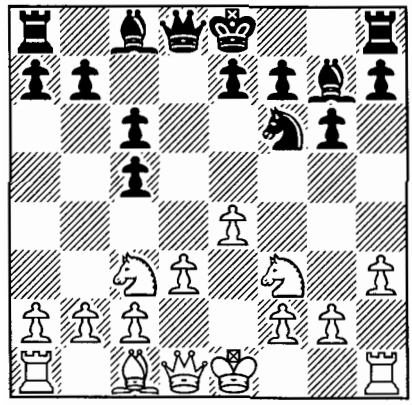
a) 6...♕c7 is merely a transposition to the 5...♕c7 line.

b) 6...♘h6 is a very strange deployment of the knight, but we have seen the same idea in the previous chapter. Here it has been played by many strong grandmasters, including the Azeri GM Teimour Radjabov. I cover this idea in the notes to Game 43.

c) 6...b6 is a sensible move defending the c5-pawn and with a very strong pedigree: both Vladimir Kramnik and Vassily Ivanchuk have been happy to take the Black side. Black is flexible and hasn't yet committed to a particular set-up – see Game 43.

d) 6...e5 is the second most-common continuation with over 600 games on the database. In Game 44 I suggest we continue with 7 0-0, rather than the more common 7 ♗e3.

7 ♘c3



7...0-0

Straightforward and Black's main try, but again there are alternatives and important ones at that:

a) 7...c4 is an important sideline attempted by the Dutch Grandmaster Van Wely. Black tries to get rid of his structural weakness, but allows White a strong initiative, as shown in the notes to Game 40.

b) 7...♕c7 is again merely a transposition to note 'c' to Black's 5th move, above.

c) 7...e5?! is an error which the strong Bulgarian GM Aleksander Delchev once made and is examined in the notes to Game 41.

d) 7...b6 is again a flexible option seen in the notes to Game 43.

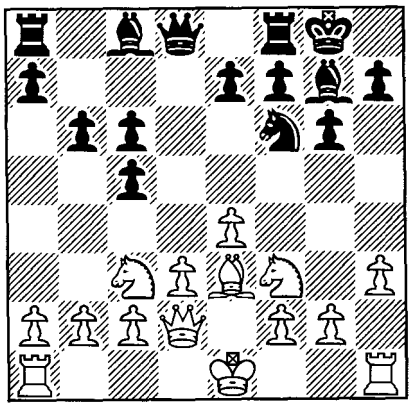
e) 7...♘d7 is the second most-common response and was Rogozenko's choice in his book: *Anti-Sicilians: A Guide for Black*. After 8 ♗e3 e5 9 ♕d2 Black can either allow the bishop trade with 9...♕e7 (Game 42) or else prevent it with 9...h6, as seen in Game 43.

8 ♗e3 b6

This is really the mainline of the whole Rossolimo. Veselin Topalov, Vassily Ivanchuk, Ruslan Ponomariov, Peter Leko and Viswanathan Anand are but a few of the top grandmasters who have played this way as Black.

Instead 8...♘d7 9 ♕d2 ♖e8 is played occasionally, but appears very dangerous and allows us a very fast attack – see Game 42.

9 ♕d2



Now:

a) 9...♗e6?! indicates that Black isn't sure of the dynamics of the position – see the notes to Game 40.

b) 9...♘d7 looks extremely odd linked with ...b6 and is just a bad version of the 7...♘d7 lines.

c) 9...♗a6 is a rather pointless move, but is seen from time to time and is also covered in the notes to Game 40.

d) Similarly 9...a5, although it has been played by strong players, doesn't look too accurate to me, as we'll also see in Game 40.

e) 9...♘e8 has been played fairly often, including by some grandmasters, but looks rather long-winded and is the main line of Game 40.

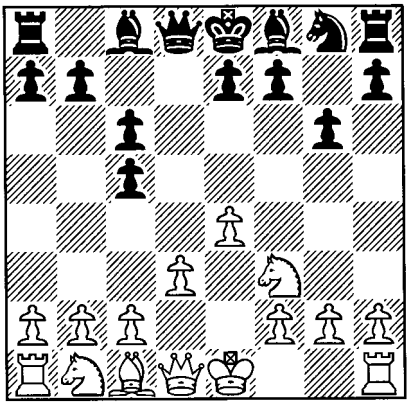
f) 9...♖e8 is often played, but 10 ♗h6 ♗h8 11 e5!? has scored very well – see Game 39.

g) As the pawn is indirectly defended, 9...e5 seems the most sensible, fighting for control of the centre and is the main line. Here I suggest the unusual 10 a3!? with the idea of breaking with b2-b4 – see Game 38.

Game 38
S.Kristjansson-Nguyen Van Huy
Dresden Olympiad 2008

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 d3

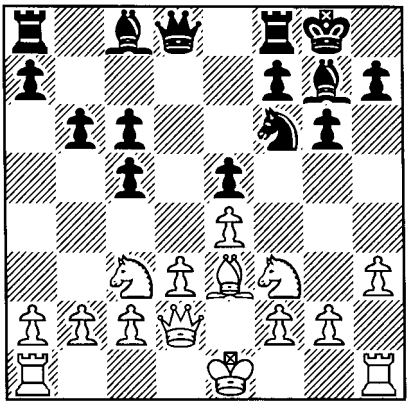
5 h3 used to be favoured, but this allows the rather annoying 5...e5!. As I've mentioned previously, a useful rule of thumb is not to worry about ...♗c8-g4 if we can react with ♘b1-d2 keeping our pieces coordinated. We will see an example of 5...♗g4 at the end of the chapter with Adams-Meins.



5...♗g7 6 h3

We want to develop our queenside knight to c3 so first we prevent Black's ...♗g4. The move has another point that we want to play ♗c1-e3 without having to worry about ...♘f6-g4 ideas.

6...♘f6 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 ♗e3 b6 9 ♕d2 e5!



This has become the main line of the whole 3...g6 Rossolimo over the past few years. Black fights for control of the centre and doesn't worry about the bishop exchange on h6.

9...♖e8 is the older move and will be investigated in the next game.

10 a3!?

I've decided to propose a repertoire around the plan of a2-a3 and b2-b4, opening lines on the queenside and allowing greater central control. Often the pawn on a7 becomes a big weakness. The text move is pretty rare and has only been played nine times according to ChessBase, albeit by a high number of titled players.

10 ♗h6 is the main move and has been the ground for many theoretical battles. White normally castles queenside and the position develops into a pawn race. While the lines are fun if you're a hacker, many people don't like their own king being under so much pressure, especially with White. After examining the lines I'm afraid I couldn't find a clear-cut way to an advantage in these crazy positions, while I'm confident that my quieter suggestion leaves White with a pleasant position.

If you're interested in these wild positions, a recent grandmaster battle continued 10...♕d6 11 0-0-0 (11 g4!? is another interesting method to attack that was tried by Kasparov) 11...a5 12 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 13 ♘h2 a4 14 ♘e2 b5 (14...c4!? 15 f4 cxd3 16 cxd3 a3 17 b3 ♗a6 worries me rather) 15 ♘g4 ♘g8 16 f4 exf4 17 ♘xf4 ♗xg4 18 hxg4 ♕e5 19 ♕e3 a3 and in L.Nisipeanu-D.Reinderman, Wijk aan Zee 2010, Black's attack looked to be landing first, although of course the position is extremely unclear.

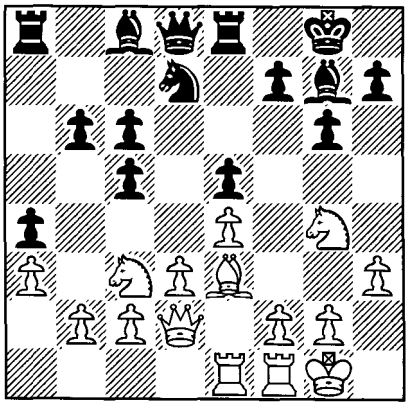
It's worth pointing out 10 ♘xe5?! ♘xe4! gets White nowhere. We should try to keep the position closed with our knights against Black's bishops. True we can try grabbing a pawn with 11 ♘xf7, but after 11...♘xd2 12 ♘xd8 ♘c4! 13 dxc4 ♖xd8 the open position favours the two bishops.

10...♕d6

The most logical-looking response, temporarily preventing our b2-b4 plan.

10...a5 has been the other try: 11 0-0 a4 (preventing our plan of b2-b4 for good, but now we can switch to playing on the king-

side; we hope that the pawn on a4 will turn out to be a weakness as it ties down Black's rook) 12 ♖ae1 ♖e8 13 ♘h2 ♘d7 has been reached in a couple of games, both proceeding 14 f4. However I think 14 ♘g4 looks much more logical when it's not so easy for Black.



Here's some of my analysis on this fresh position:

a) 14...f5?! 15 exf5 gxf5 16 ♗g5 ♕c7 17 ♘h6+ ♗xh6 18 ♗xh6 leaves Black with a very loose king.

b) The other attempt to kick away our knight with 14...h5 doesn't look very effective either as 15 ♘h6+ ♔f8 (the only logical way to continue to try and prove that the knight on h6 is offside) 16 ♗g5! f6 17 f4! with a promising-looking attack, as the bishop is taboo. Black can try 17...♔e7 18 fxe5 ♘xe5 19 ♗f4 ♕d4+ 20 ♔h1 ♗e6, but 21 ♘f5+! gxf5 22 exf5 ♗f7 23 ♗xe5 fxe5 24 f6+! ♗xf6 25 ♕h6 blows his position out of the water.

c) 14...♘f8 15 ♘h6+ forces Black to give up his dark-squared bishop and leaves him with vulnerable dark squares.

d) 14...♕e7 looks to be Black's best, waiting for us to commit: 15 ♗h6 ♘f6!? (15...♗h8 16 f4 gives White a promising looking initiative, while 15...♘f8 16 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 17 ♕h6+ ♔g8 18 ♘e3 ♘e6 19 ♘e2 ♖d8 20 f4 again looks rather awkward for Black) 16 ♗xg7 (16 f3!? looks interesting) 16...♘xg4 17 hxg4 (17 f3!? is a rather cheeky little move, with the idea of 17...♔xg7 18 fxg4, attempting to play down the semi-open f-file) 17...♔xg7 18 g5 and Black still has to be careful about his king's safety with the g5-pawn binding him down: for example, 18...♖h8 19 f4! h6 20 fxe5 ♕xg5 21 ♕f2 ♗e6 22 ♕f6+ ♕xf6 23 exf6+ ♔h7 24 e5 leaves White favourite.

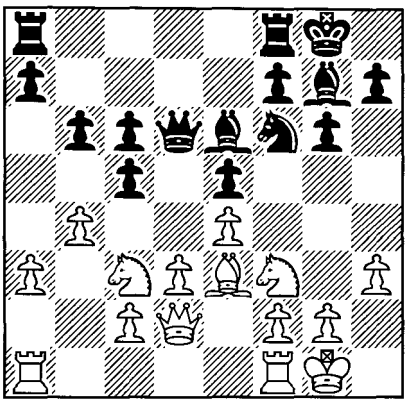
11 0-0

This is the start of the creative Icelandic's IM new idea.

11...♗e6

Now 11...a5 wouldn't make so much sense as Black could have played it the previous move.

12 b4!?



Kristjansson decides to sacrifice a pawn to open up the position. He gets the a- and b-files for his rooks and the diagonal opens up for the bishop on e3.

12...cxb4

Black takes the bait. It was also possible to decline the pawn with 12...♘d7!?, but 13 ♘g5 claims the light-squared bishop and forces a structural concession out of Black.

13 axb4 ♕xb4 14 ♖a4

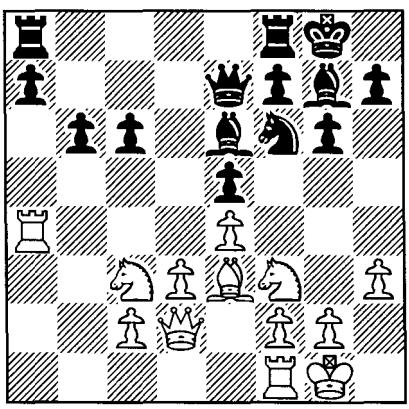
I think 14 ♖a6 would be more accurate, getting ready to double up on the a-file and also putting pressure on b6:

a) It's possible to shift the rook with 14...♗c8, but now 15 ♖a4 ♕d6 16 ♗xb6! is playable as the rook is no longer defended. Black can try 16...♗xh3, but 17 ♗xa7 ♗g4 18 ♘h2 ♗e6 19 ♖fa1 gives White good chances.

b) 14...♖fb8 15 ♖fa1 ♖b7 would hold on to the extra pawn, but 16 ♘b1!? seems promising as after 16...♕xd2 17 ♘bxd2 ♘d7 (or 17...c5 18 ♘g5 ♗d7 19 ♘c4 and Black has problems dealing with the threat of 20 ♘xb6, as 19...♗c6 can be met by 20 ♘a5!) 18 ♘g5 ♗h6 19 ♘xe6 ♗xe3 20 fxe3 fxe6 21 ♘c4 and although Black's a pawn up, he's completely tied down and it is White who can play to win at leisure.

14...♕e7?!

At this point we see an odd case of chess blindness. The e5-pawn is actually en prise now that the a4-rook defends the e4-pawn. Therefore 14...♕d6 was necessary and after 15 ♖fa1 ♕c7 (15...♕b8 looks strange, but is also possible) 16 ♖a6 ♖fb8 White has some queenside pressure, but certainly no more than a pawn's worth of compensation.



15 ♖fa1?!

15 ♘xe5! would leave White with a great position: 15...♘xe4? simply doesn't work here due to 16 ♖xe4.

15...c5?!

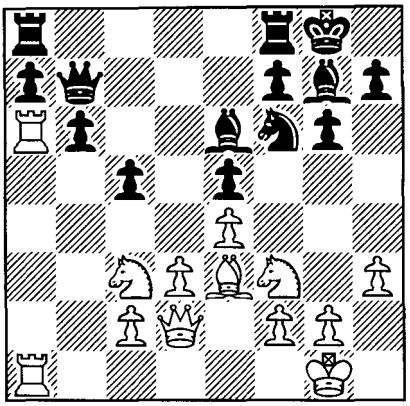
15...♕c7! would transpose to the note to Black's 14th.

16 ♖a6

16 ♘xe5! was again very good for White.

16...♕b7

Now 16 ♘xe5 is no longer on as the rook has moved, but White can instead win the a7-pawn with a pleasant position.



17 ♘b5?!

This wins back the pawn, but leaves the knight somewhat offside and loses White's advantage. 17 ♗h6!? was an alternative plan, weakening the e5-pawn. Meanwhile 17 ♕c1! is intriguing. The idea is to either play 18 ♕a3, putting another piece targeting the a7-pawn, or 18 ♕b2!? when the e5-pawn will again be en prise as the knight will be defended via X-ray from the queen.

17...♗d7 18 ♘xa7 ♘e8 19 c4!

Necessary to take back control of b5 so that the a7-knight can escape.

19...♘c7 20 ♖6a3 ♘e6 21 ♘b5

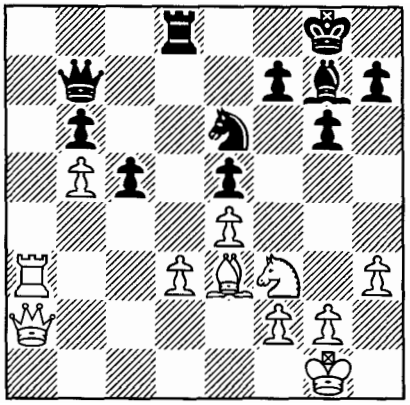
21 ♘g5!? is interesting, although the position should still be around level.

21...♗xb5 22 cxb5 ♖xa3 23 ♖xa3 ♖d8?!

23...♘c7 should have been played to tie down the queen or rook to the defence of

b5. Then 24 ♖b3 ♖a8 25 ♕c3 ♘e6! is around equal.

24 ♕a2!



White's pieces suddenly infiltrate down the open a-file.

24...♕d7?!

24...♘c7 was a better bet: 25 ♕b3 (25 ♖a7 ♕b8 26 ♘g5 ♖f8 looks pleasant for White, but there's no finish) 25...♖a8 26 ♘g5 ♖f8 and White's still better although Black survives.

25 ♘g5!

Now Black has serious concerns about the f7-square and cracks immediately.

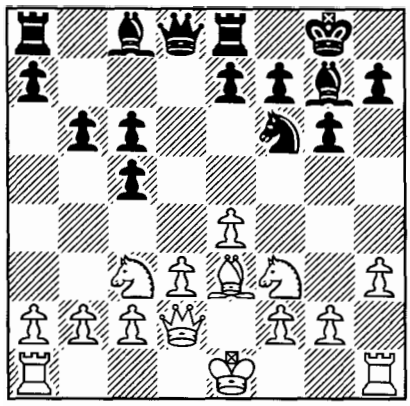
25...♘f4?

25...♘xg5 26 ♗xg5 ♖f8 27 ♖a7! ♕xd3 28 ♗e7 picks up the exchange, although Black can fight on: 28...c4 is necessary, but then after 29 ♖a8! ♕c3!? (threatening a sneaky perpetual) 30 ♔h2! ♕c1 31 g3 ♕f1 32 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 33 ♖c8 ♔g7 34 ♕b2 White should be winning.

26 ♖a7! ♕e8 27 ♘xf7 ♖b8 28 ♗xf4 1-0

Game 39
R.Ovetchkin-Y.Kuzubov
Alushta 2004

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 d3 ♗g7 6 h3 ♘f6 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 ♗e3 b6 9 ♕d2 ♖e8



10 ♗h6

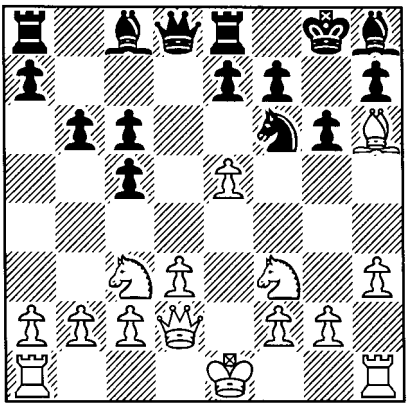
If the following doesn't appeal to you, then you could play in the same manner as the previous game with 10 a3, as employed by no less than Sergei Rublevsky. That game continued 10...a5 11 0-0 ♘d7 12 ♘h2 ♘f8 13 f4 f5 14 ♖ae1 ♘e6 15 exf5 gxf5 16 ♘f3 ♘d4 17 ♘e5 ♗e6 18 ♕f2 ♗xe5 19 fxe5 ♔h8 20 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 21 ♘e2 ♕xf2+ 22 ♖xf2 leaving White in a great endgame thanks to his much pawn structure, one which even one of the greatest defenders ever failed to hold, S.Rublevsky-U.Andersson, Polanica Zdroj 1997.

10...♗h8

10...e5 is also possible, but this leaves Black in a worse version of the critical pawn race, as the queen on d6 is more useful than the rook on e8. Practice has demonstrated that White's kingside play is significantly faster than Black's respective attack on the queenside. One game continued 11 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 12 g4 a5 13 ♘e2 (a standard idea, rerouting the knight round to the kingside; from g3 the knight prevents Black blocking up the kingside with ...♘f6-h5 after a subsequent g4-g5 and sometimes the knight can also be sacrificed on f5) 13...♗a6

14 ♘g3 ♘d7 15 g5! (15 h4 ♕f6 16 ♕e3 ♕f4 would successfully slow White's attack) 15...♕c7 16 0-0-0 (White still didn't have to castle, but evidently he was worried about 16 h4 c4) 16...♘f8 17 ♕c3 ♕d6 18 h4 ♗c8 19 ♖df1 (preventing the pin on the knight with ...♗g4) 19...b5 20 h5 b4 21 ♕e1 ♘e6 22 hxg6 hxg6?! (22...fxg6 was necessary, but White's attack is still looking promising) 23 ♖h6! ♖g8 was V.Sanduleac-P.Benkovic, Subotica 2003, and here the most direct would have been 24 ♘f5+! gxf5 25 exf5 ♕d5 26 fxe6 ♗xe6 27 ♕xe5+ ♕xe5 28 ♘xe5, winning. It's noticeable that here Black's attack is still a lot of tempi away from troubling White.

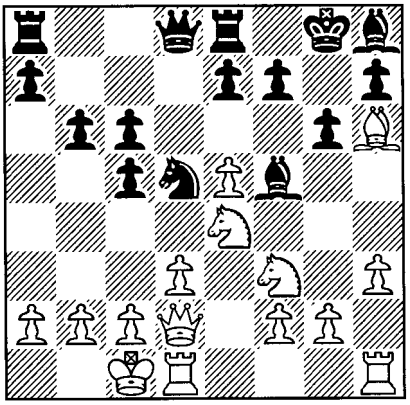
11 e5!?



I'm drawn to this aggressive move that has scored 4.5/5 in practical encounters. White forces the black knight away from the defence of the king while opening a path for his c3-knight. The move is part of a pawn sacrifice; Black will be able to win the e5-pawn, but only at the cost of his dark-squared bishop, leaving his king extremely vulnerable.

11...♘d5 12 ♘e4 ♘c7

12...♗f5 has been the other defensive method, with a further choice after 13 0-0-0:



a) 13...a5 14 g4 ♗e6 15 ♖dg1 (15 c4!? should be considered) 15...♕c7 16 h4 and then:

a1) 16...♕d7 wins the g4-pawn, but is far too risky: 17 h5 ♗xg4 18 ♘eg5 and it hardly looks like Black will survive long, as shown by, say, 18...♘b4 19 ♘xh7!? (both 19 ♘xf7 and 19 hxg6 also crash through) 19...♗xf3 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 ♖xg6+ ♔f7 (21...♔xh7 22 ♕g5) 22 ♕f4+ ♔xg6 23 ♕xf3! with mate in five according to the trusty machine.

a2) 16...♖ed8 17 h5 a4 18 hxg6 fxg6 wasn't that much of an improvement in T.Oral-P.JelenP Trencin 1995. Here 19 a3 would prevent any dreams of counterplay and White will be crashing through presently.

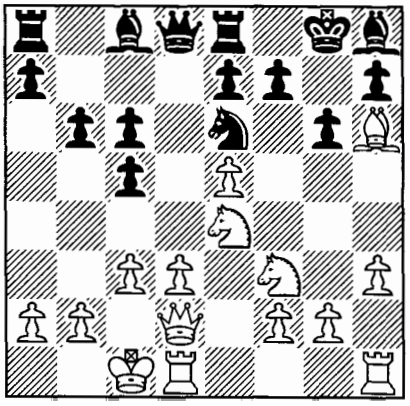
b) 13...♘c7 14 ♕e3 ♕c8 15 g4 ♗xe4 16 ♕xe4 ♕e6 17 ♔b1 (17 c4!?, defending a2 and taking possession of the d5-squar,e looks strong) 17...♖ad8 18 h4 ♕d5 19 ♕e2 b5 20 h5 b4 21 ♖de1 ♘b5 was seen in A.Naiditsch-Cao Sang, Budapest 2000, and here 22 e6! ♕xe6 23 ♕xe6 fxe6 24 hxg6 hxg6 25 ♖xe6 ♖d6 26 ♘g5 is a terrible endgame for Black. Amazingly this was the only draw that Black has managed in this line.

13 0-0-0 ♘e6

13...♘b5 was tried the first time 11 e5

was played in F.Nijboer-M.Kuijf, Wijk aan Zee 1992, when White should have prevented the knight coming to d4 with 14 c3!, with a good version of the game as the black knight is rather misplaced.

14 c3!



Not allowing Black any counterplay with the d4-square. Instead 14 h4 ♘d4 15 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 16 f4 ♗g4 17 ♖de1 c4 gives Black decent counterplay.

14...♕c7

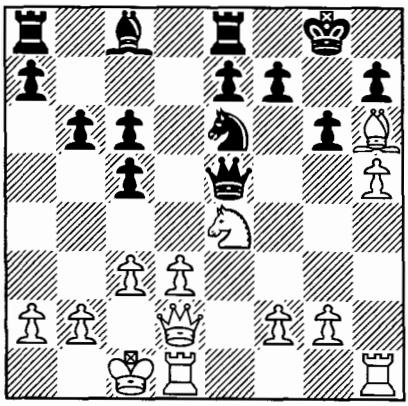
Black's play on the queenside is obviously going to be too slow, so he has to try catching the e5-pawn. Here's an illustrative line if Black does nothing: 14...a5 15 h4 a4 16 h5 a3 17 b3 ♗a6 18 hxg6 hxg6 (18...fxg6 is better, but 19 ♘eg5! ♘xg5 20 ♕xg5 ♕d5 21 ♕h4! ♖ad8 22 ♗e3 h5 23 c4 ♕e6 24 ♕e4 leaves Black in a dreadful mess) 19 ♗f8!! is an important tactic to remember. Now wouldn't 19...♘xf8 20 ♖xh8+! ♔xh8 21 ♕h6+ ♔g8 22 ♖h1 f6 23 ♕h8+ ♔f7 24 ♘eg5+ fxg5 25 ♘xg5 mate be a pretty game to play?

15 h4

15 ♔b1!? is an interesting nuance. The subtle idea is to defend the a2-pawn so that after 15...♗xe5 16 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 17 f4! ♕d5 (17...♕h5 18 ♗g5 ♘xg5 19 fxg5 leaves both members of Black's royalty in trouble), 18 g4! can be played immediately without having to worry about Black's counterplay. Indeed, here I imagine White's attack is simply too fast, such as after 18...♘f8 19 f5!.

15...♗xe5 16 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 17 h5

17 f4!? ♕d5 18 g4 is also tempting, but rather messy. It's more logical to open the h-file.



17...♗a6

This is too slow to prevent White's steamroller of an attack on the kingside. 17...c4 is probably essential, but Black's position is really hanging by a thread. The position reminds me of certain Dragon lines and as a Dragon player myself I would not feel at all comfortable defending here. A sample line might proceed 18 hxg6 (18 f3 cxd3 19 ♕xd3 also leaves White with promising compensation) 18...hxg6 19 f4 ♕d5 20 ♕e3! cxd3 21 ♗g5 f6 (21...♕xa2 22 ♗xe7! ♖xe7 23 ♘f6+ ♔g7 24 ♖h7+ mates) 22 ♗xf6 ♕xa2 23 ♖h8+ ♔f7 24 ♖h7+ ♔g8 25 ♖dh1 ♕a1+ 26 ♔d2 ♕xb2+ 27 ♔e1 and White wins.

18 hxg6 hxg6

18...fxg6 is hardly a move that Black wants to play as his pawn structure has been decimated, but at least here it's harder to deliver mate down the h-file. Still, 19 ♖de1 ♕d5 20 c4 ♕d4 21 f4 ♖ad8 22 ♖h3

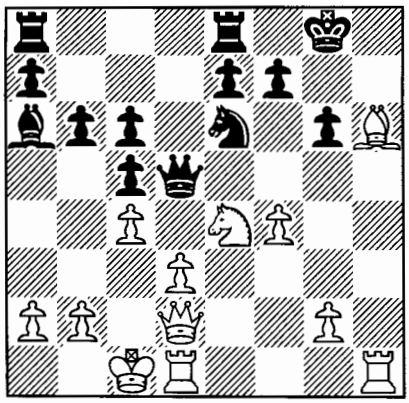
leaves White with a mammoth kingside attack. Black should probably try to get some counterplay with 22...♗xc4, but 23 dxc4 ♕xc4+ 24 ♕c2 ♕xa2 25 ♘c3 ♕a1+ 26 ♘b1 prevents Black's counterattack going any further when White can return to his plan of mating the black king.

19 f4

White's position simply plays itself.

19...♕d5 20 c4!

It's unnecessary to allow Black counterplay after, for example, 20 g4 ♕xa2 21 f5 ♖ed8! 22 ♕h2 ♕a1+ 23 ♔c2 ♕a4+ 24 ♔b1 ♗c4!, which looks to hold the draw: 25 ♗g5 ♕a2+ 26 ♔c1 ♕a1+ 27 ♔c2 ♕a4+.



20...♕d4

Kuzubov doesn't realise the danger he's in. 20...♗xc4 had to be played. The endgame after 21 ♘c3 ♕xd3 22 ♕xd3 ♗xd3 23 ♖xd3 favours White, but at least Black would still be in the game.

21 g4! ♖ad8

Again 21...♗xc4 should have been tried, but 22 f5 ♖ad8 23 f6!! is a very pretty win: 23...♕xd3 (or 23...exf6 24 ♕c3! ♕xc3+ 25 bxc3 ♗xd3 26 ♘xf6+ ♔h8 27 ♗f8 mate) 24 ♗g7!! ♕xd2+ (if 24...♘xg7 25 ♖h8+ ♔xh8 26 ♕h6+ ♔g8 27 ♕xg7 mate or 24...exf6 25 ♖h8+ ♔xg7 26 ♕h6 mate) 25 ♖xd2 ♘xg7 (25...exf6 26 ♗xf6) 26 fxe7! and amazingly despite the simplification Black is lost, as there's no defence to 27 ♘f6 mate.

22 f5

22 ♕h2!? would probably have finished the game quicker, but Ovetchkin goes for the safer option.

22...♕xe4

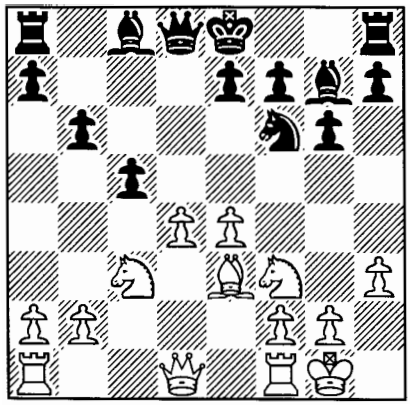
This just loses but it was already too late for Black. Instead 22...♗xc4 would transpose to the previous note.

23 dxe4 ♖xd2 24 ♖xd2 ♘d4 25 ♖dh2 1-0

Game 40
V.Bologan-A.Kharlov
USSR Team Championship 1991

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 h3 ♘f6 6 d3 ♗g7 7 ♘c3 0-0

It's possible to challenge White immediately with 7...c4!? when I think we should play for the initiative with 8 0-0 (taking the pawn with 8 dxc4 ♕xd1+ 9 ♔xd1 ♗e6 10 c5 0-0-0+ 11 ♔e1 ♘d7 12 ♗e3 gave Black decent compensation for the pawn, although perhaps White is still a smudge better, A.Kim-D.Yevseev, Peterhof 2006) 8...cxd3 9 cxd3 c5 10 ♗e3 b6 11 d4 which has been reached in a couple of games by Van Wely.



In the first he tried 11...cxd4 12 ♗xd4 0-0 13 ♕a4 ♕d7 when I think White's best try to keep an initiative going is 14 ♕xd7 (instead 14 ♕b4 ♕d6 15 ♕b5 ♕d7 didn't really get anywhere in A.Grischuk-L.Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2003) 14...♗xd7 (14...♘xd7 15 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 16 ♖fd1 leaves White with a small but definite advantage thanks to his more active pieces) 15 e5 ♘h5 16 ♗e3, threatening to trap the knight and thereby forcing 16...f5 17 ♖ad1 (17 ♖fd1 ♖ad8 18 ♘d5! also looks promising) 17...♖ad8 18 ♗g5 ♔f7 19 ♖fe1 ♗e6 20 ♗c1 h6 21 ♘d4 and Black still cannot be entirely happy with his position.

The Dutch Grandmaster later deviated with 11...♗b7, although 12 d5 0-0 13 ♕b3 ♕c8 14 ♖ad1 e6 15 ♗g5 exd5 16 e5! c4 17 ♕c2 ♘d7 18 ♘xd5 left White with a dynamic initiative, while the g7-bishop had been blocked out of the game in R.Ponomariov-L.Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2003.

8 ♗e3 b6

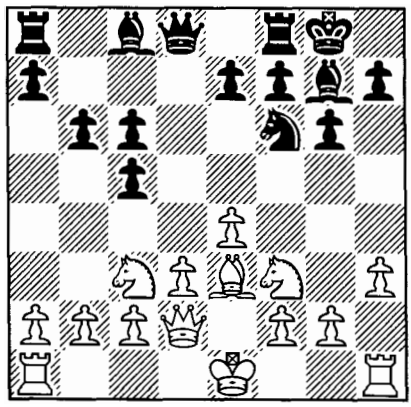
Alternatively:

a) 8...c4 9 0-0 cxd3 10 cxd3 would be rather similar to the previous note, but here Black cannot challenge the centre with ...c6-c5 and thus White will retain his centre: 10...♕a5 11 d4 ♗e6 12 ♕c2 h6 13 a3 ♖fd8 14 b4 ♕h5 15 ♘e2 ♕b5 16 ♘f4 ♕c4 17 ♕b1 ♕b3 18 e5 ♘e8 19 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 20 b5 saw the former World Champion successfully grinding away in G.Kasparov-M.Miranda, Rio de Janiero (simul) 1996

b) 8...♕a5 is a slightly strange way to defend the c5-pawn, as the queen is rather out of place. Then 9 ♕d2 ♖d8 10 0-0 ♗d7 11 ♗h6 ♕c7 12 ♗xg7 ♔xg7, G.Kasparov-F.Niebling, Frankfurt (simul) 2000, was another game of probably the world's strongest-ever player. After 13 ♕g5 b6 14 e5 ♘g8 15 ♖ae1 Black is really struggling. It's noticeable that Black's queen has returned to c7 and he's been obliged to play ...b6, so ...♕a5 was definitely not a success.

c) 8...♕b6 is also rather a cumbersome square for the black queen. In M.Rudolf-B.Nowicki, Warsaw 2009, 9 ♖b1 ♘d7 10 0-0 ♕a5 11 ♕d2 saw a rather similar position to 8...♕a5, and one in which we should feel very comfortable.

9 ♕d2



9...♘e8

This seems a rather long-winded approach. Black intends to defend with ...f7-f6 and ...e7-e5 or by bringing the knight round to e6 via c7. As well as 9...e5 and 9...♖e8, he has also been known to try:

a) I have to confess I don't understand 9...a5 as White was not yet threatening b2-b4, while the queenside only looks more vulnerable once Black plays ...a5-a4. Let's follow another Kasparov game: 10 ♗h6 a4 11 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 12 a3 ♕c7 13 0-0 ♖d8 14 ♕e3 ♘h5?! (14...e5 was better, although 15 ♘d2 ♘h5 16 ♘e2 is still pleasant for White) 15 e5! (suddenly Black must place himself in contortions to keep the knight) 15...♔g8 16 ♕h6 f6 17 ♘e4 ♗f5 18 ♖ae1 ♗xe4 19 ♖xe4 fxe5 20 ♖xe5 ♘f6 21 ♖fe1 ♖d7 22 ♘g5 e6 23 ♖xe6 ♖f8 and Black resigned before seeing 24 ♖xf6 in G.Kasparov-

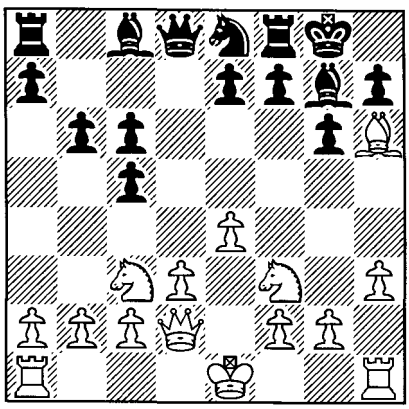
H.Papaioannou, Patras (simul) 2001 .

b) Likewise 9...♗a6 is sometimes played, but seeing as ...c5-c4 can be met by d3-d4 the move is futile: 10 ♗h6 c4 11 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 12 d4 b5 was N.Delgado Ramirez-S.Mirza, Mallorca Olympiad 2004, when 13 a3 would have made the idea look rather suspicious, particularly as 13...c5 can be met by 14 e5 ♘d7 15 e6! fxe6 16 ♘g5 ♕b6 17 d5! when Black has a lot of problems.

c) 9...♗e6 shows a lack of understanding of the position because now Black is no longer able to play ...e7-e5 and rerouting the knight will also be problematic, as he has to watch out for the threat of ♘f3-g5. A fairly recent game continued 10 ♗h6 b5 11 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 12 ♕e3 ♕b6 13 ♘g5 ♗d7 14 f4 e6 15 0-0 with a very pleasant situation for White in N.Kabanov-V.Kalmachevskikh, Khanty Mansiysk 2008.

10 0-0-0

10 ♗h6 is probably a more accurate move order.

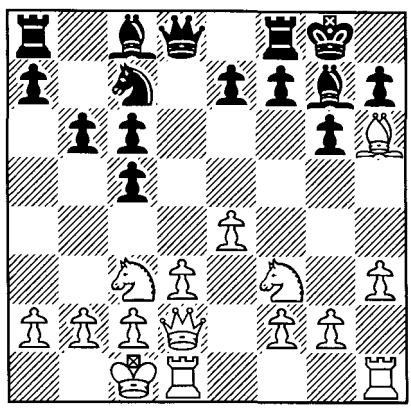


This is because White can respond to 10...f6 with 11 e5! ♗e6 12 0-0-0 ♗xh6 (the older 12...♗d5 of S.Makarichev-M.Chandler, Moscow 1990, is probably stronger, although 13 ♘xd5 cxd5 – 13...♕xd5 14 ♔b1 leaves White with a safe edge – 14 ♖de1 looks quite promising) 13 ♕xh6 ♘g7 14 g4 ♗d5 15 ♘e4 ♘e6 16 h4 ♕e8, as in J.Van Mil-I.Rogers, Belgian League 2005, when 17 exf6 exf6 18 h5 ♗xe4 19 dxe4 g5 20 e5 ♕e7 21 ♖d6 would have left the recently-retired Australian Grandmaster under overwhelming pressure. Instead here 10...♘c7 11 0-0-0 would transpose to the game, although 11 h4!? is also possible.

10...♘c7

10...e5 is Black's alternative set-up and is possible thanks to White's move order: 11 ♗h6 f6 (11...♕e7 looks a little more flexible when 12 ♔b1, waiting to see how Black is going to commit, looks best) 12 g4 ♕e7 13 ♖dg1 ♘c7 14 ♗xg7 ♕xg7 15 h4 ♘e6 16 ♘e2 left White with promising kingside play in J.Peters-R.Reynolds, Los Angeles 2009.

11 ♗h6

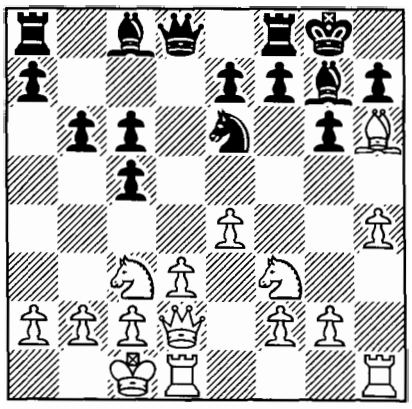


11...♘e6

This plan strikes me as very lethargic. It's not even completely clear to me that the knight stands better on e6 than f6, as now there is nothing impeding the h-pawn advance. 11...b5 has also been tried, but the story was similar: 12 h4! ♗g4 (12...♗xh6 13 ♕xh6 f6, as played in our main game, is Black's only try) 13 h5! gxh5 (13...♗xh5 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 15 g4 crashes through) 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 was E.Arancibia Guzman-A.Rios

Escobar, Santiago de Chile 2005, and now the most accurate coup de grâce would have been 15 ♘e5! ♗xd1 16 ♕g5+ ♔h8 17 ♘xd1 ♘e8 18 ♕xh5 ♘f6 19 ♕h6 ♕c8 20 ♘e3! and Black has no defence to ♘e3-f5 or ♘e3-g4.

12 h4



Again White's play is hardly subtle, but is extremely effective. After all we have four pieces pointing towards the black king, which only has a single bishop and knight to defend.

12...♗xh6 13 ♕xh6 f6 14 ♘e2

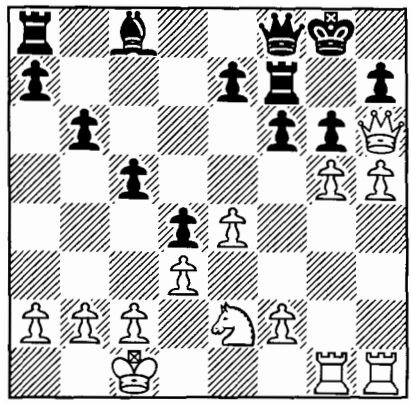
14 e5!? also looks strong, but 14 h5?! would be ill advised, as after 14...g5 our queen is trapped for the foreseeable future. Instead 14 g4 can be met by 14...♘d4, so Bologan prepares that advance.

14...♖f7 15 g4 ♘d4 16 ♘fxd4 cxd4 17 ♖dg1 c5?!

This is practically the losing move. 17...e5 was a better way to defend the d4-pawn, as then Black does not lose a pawn, although the endgame is still unpleasant after 18 g5 ♕f8 19 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 20 h5 gxh5 21 ♖xh5 fxg5 22 ♖gxg5 ♖xf2 23 ♔d2, since White's pieces are so much more active and Black's pawns rather vulnerable.

18 g5 ♕f8 19 h5!

White wins a pawn and opens up the g-file for the rooks.



19...♕xh6 20 gxh6 g5 21 f4

And the pawn bites the dust. It will be possible to Black to retrieve the h6-pawn but the time it takes to win that pawn allows White to create further problems.

21...♔h8

21...g4 22 f5 doesn't help.

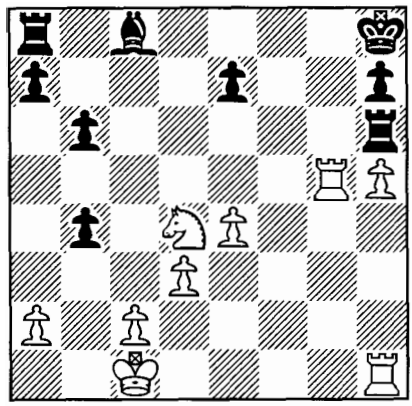
22 fxg5 fxg5 23 ♖xg5 ♖f6

23...♗e6 is a better move order, but 24 ♖hg1 ♖f2 25 ♔d2 leaves White in total control.

24 b4!?

Attacking on both flanks. 24 ♖g7! was also very strong as the pawn cannot be kept as 24...e5 can be met with 25 ♖g5.

24...cxb4 25 ♘xd4 ♖xh6



So we're back to material equality, but it's easy to see that White's pieces are far better placed – just look at the rooks on h6 and a8. White's structure is also far better.

26 ♖f1

26 ♖hg1 ♗d7 27 ♔b2 ♖f6 (or 27...♖d6 28 ♘f3 and thence to e5) 28 ♖d5 ♗e8 29 ♖e5 was another possible way to proceed.

26...♗e6 27 ♔b2 a5

Allowing the swap of e7 and h5 is disastrous. 27...♖e8 looks exceedingly passive, but would at least defend the pawn.

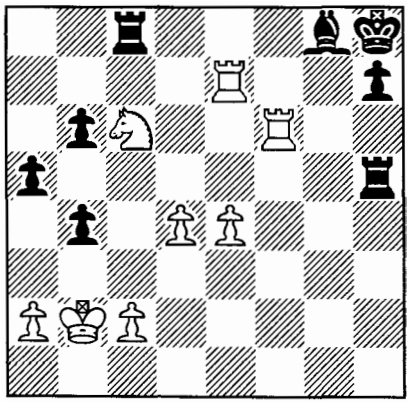
28 ♖e5 ♗g8 29 ♖xe7 ♖xh5 30 ♖f6

Black has a passed pawn, but it won't be able to move as Black's king is too vulnerable. In the meantime White has a couple of passed pawns of his own. With that in mind, 30 e5! looks very sensible. It would also prevent the next note as now 30...a4 can be met by 31 e6, blocking in the bishop.

30...♖d8?!

30...a4! had to be tried to conjure up some counter-chances against White's king, even if after 31 a3 b3 32 ♖xb6 ♖c8 33 ♖bb7 ♖h2 34 ♖ec7 everything should be under control. However, once a pair of rooks is exchanged, the h-pawn will be able to move and therefore Black has some counter-chances.

31 ♘c6 ♖c8 32 d4!



Now Bologan's pawns roll home.

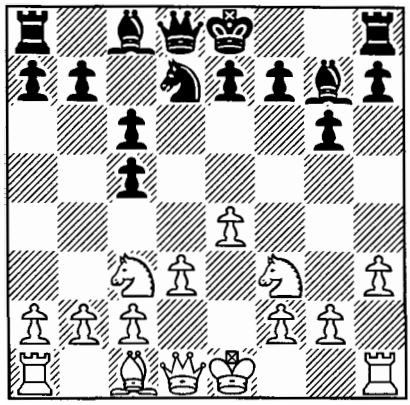
32...♖g5 33 d5 ♖g7 34 ♖f2 ♖xe7 35 ♘xe7 ♖e8 36 d6 ♗e6 37 ♖f6 ♗g4 38 e5 ♔g7 39 ♘f5+ ♗xf5 40 ♖xf5 ♖d8 41 c3 ♖f8 42 d7!

Certainly not 42 ♖xf8?? ♔xf8 43 cxb4 h5!, turning the tables completely.

42...♖xf5 43 d8♕ bxc3+ 44 ♔xc3 ♖xe5 45 ♕c7+ ♔f6 46 ♕xh7 b5 47 ♕h8+ ♔f5 48 ♕c8+ ♔f4 49 ♕c7 ♔e4 50 ♕xa5 1-0

Game 41
E.Sutovsky-T.Baron
European Championship, Rijeka 2010

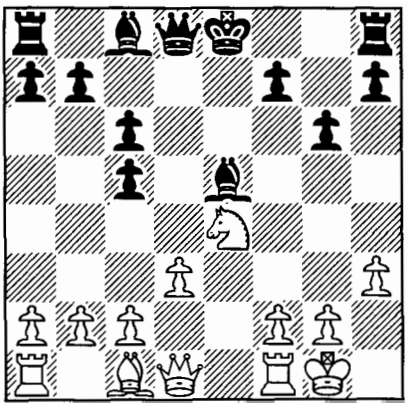
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 d3 ♗g7 6 h3 ♘f6 7 ♘c3 ♘d7



The knight drops back, preparing ...e7-e5 and defending the c5-pawn.

The immediate 7...e5?! looks inaccurate with Black's king still in the centre. White can exploit it with 8 ♘xe5! (interestingly 8 ♗e3 has been the choice of many grandmasters, including Kasparov albeit only in a simul; this will transpose to other lines, but taking the pawn is stronger) 8...♘xe4 9 ♘xe4 ♗xe5 10 0-0. I said previously it was not good to open up the position for Black's dark-squared bishop, but here it is justified

because White hits the c5-pawn and threatens the black king; both of which cannot be defended at the same time. White has scored an overwhelming 6.5/7 from here:



a) 10...0-0 11 ♘xc5 ♕h4 (A.Krutko-V.Artamonov, Ekaterinburg 2008) 12 ♖e1 ♗c7 (12...♗d4 13 ♘e4 gets nowhere as 13...f5 allows 14 ♗g5 ♗xf2+ 15 ♔h1) 13 ♘e4 when White has consolidated his extra pawn, as 13...♗xh3? loses to 14 ♗g5!.

b) 10...♕e7 defends the c5-pawn, but gets into trouble along the e-file: 11 ♖e1 ♗e6 (or 11...0-0 12 ♗h6 ♗g7 – 12...♖e8 13 ♗g5 ♕f8 14 ♗f6 leaves White with a very dangerous initiative – 13 ♗g5! ♕c7 14 ♘f6+ ♔h8 15 ♘e8! and Black's dark squares are too vulnerable) 12 ♘g5 (12 ♕f3 0-0 13 ♗f4 is an alternative route to a clear advantage) 12...♗f6 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 ♕g4 ♔f7 15 ♗h6 left Black under a lot of pressure but 15...♗xb2? 16 ♖ab1 ♗f6 17 ♖xb7! and 1-0 certainly didn't help in G.Mohr-I.Jelen, Bled 2002.

c) With 10...c4 Black tries at least to damage White's pawn structure in return for the pawn, although after 11 ♖e1! ♗e6 (11...0-0 12 ♗h6 ♖e8 13 ♗g5 ♕d7 14 ♗f6 is a motif we've seen before) 12 ♗g5 ♕d4 in R.Rabiega-G.5chebler, Höckendorf 2004, the cleanest looks to be 13 c3! ♕xd3 14 ♘c5 ♕xd1 (14...♕f5 15 f4! ♗xf4 16 ♕d7+! ♔f8 17 ♘xe6+ fxe6 18 ♗xf4 wins) 15 ♖axd1 h6 16 ♗h4 g5 17 ♗xg5 hxg5 18 ♖xe5 ♔e7 19 ♘xe6 fxe6 20 ♖de1 ♖h6 21 ♖xg5 which leaves White a pawn up in the endgame and this should be rather easy to convert with our connected passed pawns on the kingside.

8 ♗e3 e5 9 ♕d2 h6

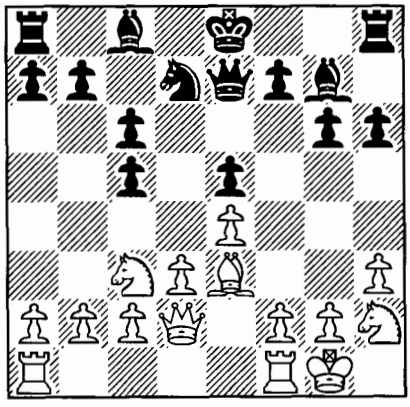
An ambitious choice. Black prevents the bishop exchange, but this means his king will be stuck in the centre for a few moves, allowing us to drum up an initiative.

9...♕e7 is Rogozenko's choice in his *Anti-Sicilians: A Guide for Black* and will be looked at in the following game.

10 0-0

10 ♘g1!? is a bizarre-looking move, but the idea is to get in our f2-f4 break and then recapture with our knight, thereby keeping our pieces coordinated. 10...♕e7 11 ♘ge2 ♘f8 12 f4 exf4 13 ♘xf4 ♘d7 14 0-0 0-0 15 ♖ae1 ♘e5 was unclear, but I quite like White's prospects, L.McShane-L.Johannessen, Novi Sad 2009.

10...♕e7 11 ♘h2



Preparing f2-f4, opening up the kingside, while Black is obliged to keep his king in the centre. Again it is possible to play on

the queenside with 11 a3, but I like the dynamic choice of the game.

11...♘f8

Black reroutes his knight to d4 while gaining time on the white piece on f4. It's also possible for Black to take direct steps to prevent f2-f4 with 11...g5, although this weakens the f5- and h5-squares. Finkel now gives the line 12 ♘e2 ♘f8 13 ♘g3 ♘g6, but here he overlooks the possibility of 14 ♕c3! b6 15 b4!, winning a pawn.

12 f4 exf4 13 ♗xf4!?

13 ♖xf4 has been more popular in the past, but recently the top players have switched to capturing with the bishop. Sutovsky decides he would prefer his bishop on g3. While that allows Black to castle kingside we can then build up a dangerous initiative on the e- and f-files.

13...♘e6

This is the logical continuation of Black's plan. Others:

a) 13...♗e6 has also been played a handful of times, but it's not very logical in conjunction with Black's previous few moves: 14 ♗g3 ♘d7 (14...0-0-0 15 ♕f4 was White's idea) 15 ♘f3 g5 16 ♖ae1 0-0 was B.Maciej-L.Schandorff, Saint Vincent 2005, and now 17 ♘d5! (17 e5!? could also be considered) 17...cxd5 18 exd5 ♗xb2 19 c3 ♗a3 20 h4! would have left Black really struggling.

b) 13...g5 has been the Belgian IM Bart Michiels' choice, with the idea of developing the knight to g6, but this creates a few holes in his position. Mickey Adams continued 14 ♗g3 ♘g6 15 e5! 0-0 16 ♖ae1 ♗e6 17 ♘f3 ♗d5 18 ♘xd5!? (18 ♘e4 would be more usual) 18...cxd5 19 c3 ♖ae8 20 d4 cxd4 21 ♕xd4! with a comfortable position in M.Adams-B.Michiels, German League 2009.

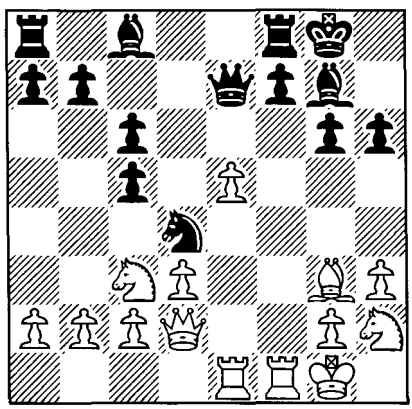
14 ♗g3 ♘d4

Black might also try:

a) 14...0-0 15 e5 ♘d4 16 ♖ae1 would transpose to the game.

b) 14...♕g5 was played a couple of times by Loek van Wely, but 15 ♕e1! (we want to keep the queens on for our attack) 15...♘d4 16 ♕f2! 0-0 17 ♗d6 wins material. The rook cannot move due to the pressure on f7. Surprisingly van Wely repeated this position, but it simply looks unpleasant. He tried 17...♗xh3, but after 18 ♗f4! ♕xg2+ 19 ♕xg2 ♗xg2 20 ♔xg2 ♘xc2 21 ♖ad1 in both A.Shirov-L.Van Wely, Monte Carlo (rapid) 2005, and P.Leko-L.Van Wely, Dortmund 2005, the Dutch Grandmaster failed to hold.

15 ♖ae1 0-0 16 e5!



The point of capturing with the bishop. As we saw in the last game, e4-e5 is a useful move, controlling the f6- and d6-squares and preparing a route for the queenside knight.

16...♗f5

Black needs to block the way to f6.

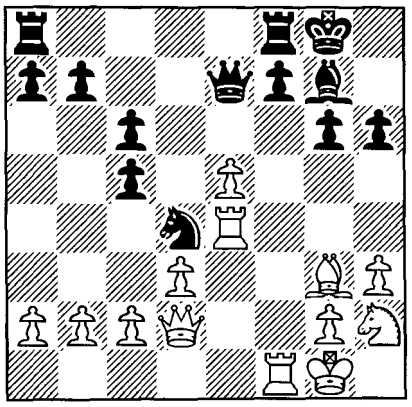
16...♘f5 is the other try, but it seems a shame for Black to move his only well-placed piece. The game V.Papin-V.Stamenkov, Plovdiv 2008, continued 17 ♗f2 b6 18 ♘f3 ♖d8 19 ♘e4 ♗e6 when I like the look of 20 b4! ♘d4 (20...cxb4 21 g4 traps the knight) 21 ♗xd4 cxd4 22 ♘f6+ ♗xf6

(22...♔h8 23 ♖e4 cannot really be considered) 23 exf6 ♕xf6 24 ♕xh6 which promises White a strong attack.

17 ♘e4 ♗xe4

17...h5 was played in an earlier game from last year: 18 ♘f6+!? (sacrificing the pawn to weaken Black's dark squares; 18 ♘d6 was an alternative positional response when 18...♗e6 19 ♘f3, forcing Black's knight away, looks very strong) 18...♗xf6 19 exf6 ♕xf6 20 ♗e5 ♕d8 21 g4 hxg4 was Y.Gonzalez Vidal-F.Corrales Jimenez, Ciego de Avila 2010, when White should have brought his knight into play with 22 ♘xg4! ♕h4 (22...♗xg4 23 ♕h6! f6 24 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 25 ♖xf6 mates) 23 ♘f6+ ♔h8 24 ♘e4+ f6 (24...♔g8 25 ♖f4 ♕xh3 26 ♘f6+ ♔g7 27 ♖e3 wins the queen) 25 ♘xf6 ♖xf6 26 ♕f4! and wins. Here 21...f6! is better when 22 gxf5 fxe5 23 ♕h6 ♘xf5 24 ♕xg6+ ♘g7 looks dangerous for Black, but appears to hold.

18 ♖xe4



18...h5

Preventing White's knight jumping to the g4-square, although as Black only survived another six moves, it's perhaps unlikely to be repeated. Thus our opponents might prefer:

a) 18...♘f5 19 ♗f4 ♔h7 20 ♘g4 ♖ad8 21 ♕f2 ♖d5 22 b3 ♖fd8 23 ♗c1! (craftily rerouting to the long diagonal) 23...♔h8 (probably 23...h5 should have been attempted as after 24 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 25 exf6 ♕xf6 26 g4 Black saves his piece with 26...♕g7!, although White is still on top after 27 ♖a4 ♘d6 28 ♖xa7) 24 ♗b2 ♕c7 25 ♘f6 ♗xf6 26 exf6 ♔h7 27 ♖fe1 left Black in a lot of trouble and after 27...♕g3? 28 ♕xg3 ♘xg3 29 ♖e7 he could already resign in J.Lopez Martinez-M.Zaslavsky, Rijeka 2010.

b) 18...♖ad8 19 ♗h4! g5 20 ♘g4! was another good advert for White's choice: 20...♘e6 21 ♘f6+ ♔h8 22 ♗g3 and it's surprising Black managed to last another 15 moves in T.Kosintseva-V.Cmilyte, Turin 2006.

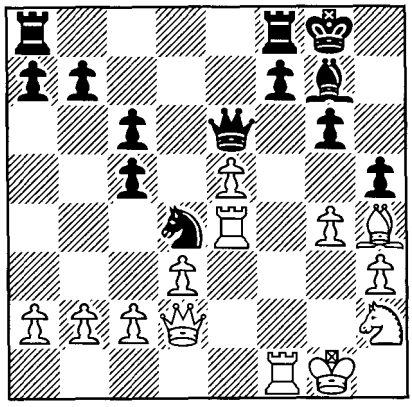
19 ♗h4!

19 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ 20 ♖xf3, as in J.Hammer-A.Korobov, Cappelle la Grande 2009, would be a safe alternative but Sutovsky, true to his spirit, goes for the throat.

19...♕e6

This is the first new move but it doesn't change the assessment. Previously 19...♕c7 20 ♗f6 ♔h7 21 g4 ♗h6 22 ♕f2 ♖g8 23 e6! ♘xe6 24 ♗e5 ♕d7 25 ♕xf7+ ♕xf7 26 ♖xf7+ ♗g7 27 ♖xb7 was already winning for White in E.Kalegin-S.Sokolov, Kazan 2008.

20 g4!



Opening a path for White's knight and

destroying Black's pawn cover.

20...♕xa2

Black has nothing better so Baron decides to grab the pawn. 20...hxg4 21 ♘xg4 ♘f5 22 ♘f6+ ♔h8 23 ♗g5 would leave Black defenceless to the threat of 24 ♖xf5 and 25 ♖h4+.

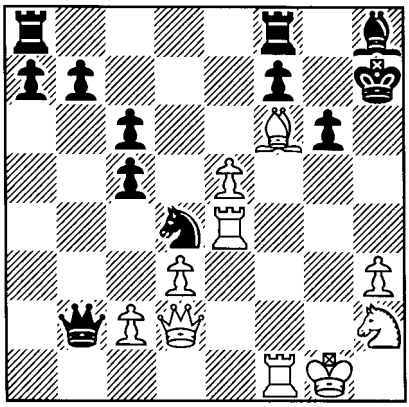
21 gxh5 ♕xb2

21...gxh5 would prevent the course of the game, but now the g-file is too exposed. The easiest finish looks to be 22 ♖xd4! cxd4 23 ♗f6 ♗xf6 24 exf6 ♔h7 25 ♘g4! hxg4 26 ♕g5 ♖g8 27 ♕h5 mate.

22 h6! ♗h8 23 h7+!

Forcing the king out into the open.

23...♔xh7 24 ♗f6 1-0

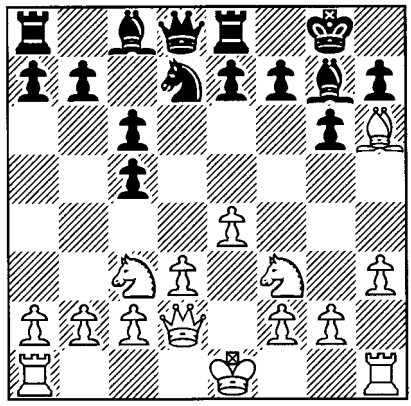


Black resigned as it is mate shortly.

Game 42
M.Carlsen-N.Djukic
European Team
Champ'ship, Heraklion 2007

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 d3 ♗g7 6 h3 ♘f6 7 ♘c3 ♘d7 8 ♗e3 e5

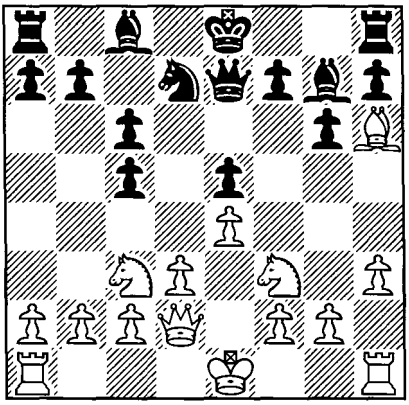
8...0-0 9 ♕d2 ♖e8 is played from time to time, intending to keep the dark-squared bishops on the board. However this approach seems incredibly risky after 10 ♗h6:



a) 10...♗h8 11 h4! has scored an almost complete whitewash with 9.5/10: 11...b5 (11...e5 doesn't change the story: 12 h5 ♕e7 13 0-0-0 ♘f8 14 hxg6 fxg6 15 ♖h4 ♗f6 16 ♗g5 h5 17 ♖dh1 ♘h7 18 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 19 ♕h6 ♕g7 20 ♕e3 b6 21 ♘d2 ♖f8 22 f3 ♘f6 23 ♘c4 ♖e8 24 g4 was another success in a more recent game, J.Rowson-M.Herbold, Edinburgh 2009) 12 h5 b4 13 ♘d1 ♗a6 14 hxg6 hxg6 15 ♕f4 ♘f6 16 ♘e3 (16 e5! ♘d5 17 ♕h4 would be more direct) 16...♕a5 17 e5 ♘d5 18 ♘xd5 cxd5 19 ♗f8! b3+ 20 c3 was a rout, especially when you consider Black was a Grandmaster, E.Van Haastert-K.Van der Weide, Chemnitz 1998.

b) 10...e5 is the other approach, but this has transposed to positions similar to those seen in note 'b' to Black's 10th move in our main game which seem rather dubious for Black. Here 11 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 12 0-0-0 ♘f8 13 ♖df1!? (preparing for the opening of the f-file) 13...♕f6 14 ♘e2 ♗e6 (14...♘e6 was an attempted improvement in P.H.Nielsen-M.Santo Roman, Cappelle la Grande 1998, but 15 ♔b1! sidesteps any annoying checks when 15...a5 16 ♘h2 ♘f4 17 ♘g4 ♗xg4 18 hxg4 would have left White well on top) 15 ♘e1! c4 16 f4 cxd3 17 ♘xd3 exf4 18 ♖xf4 ♕e7 19 h4 with a promising attack, E.Kengis-H.Spangenberg, Yerevan Olympiad 1996.

9 ♕d2 ♕e7 10 ♗h6



10...f6

Solid, but not the only move which has been tried:

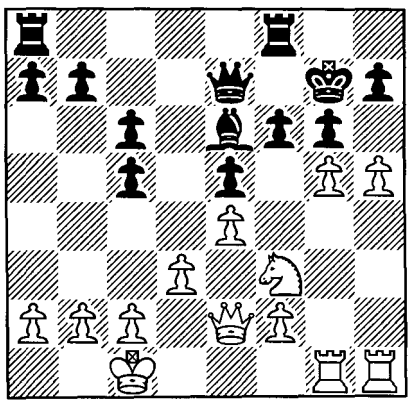
a) 10...♗xh6 is the older move, but as Rogozenko points out, we can annoy Black with 11 ♕xh6 f6 12 ♘h4! which is rather unpleasant for Black to deal with:

a1) 13 ♘xg6 is the threat so Black usually tries 12...♕f8 13 ♕d2 ♕e7 14 0-0-0 f5 (Filippov later tried to improve with 14...♘f8, but 15 ♕h6! – again we see this idea preventing the f8-knight from moving – 15...♗e6 16 g3 – 16 f4!? exf4 17 ♖hf1, playing as in the 12...♘f8 line, looks good – 16...0-0-0 17 f4 and White was more comfortably placed in L.Nisipeanu-V.Filippov, Istanbul 2003) 15 g3 f4 16 ♘g2 fxg3 17 fxg3 was pleasant for White with his better structure and lead in development, V.Ivanchuk-V.Filippov, Chalkidiki 2002.

a2) 12...♘f8 looks logical, but the problem is that it's hard for Black to coordinate as the knight must stay on f8: 13 0-0 ♗e6 (13...♕f7 14 f4 exf4 15 ♖xf4 ♘d7 16 e5! ♕f8 – 16...♘xe5 17 ♖e1 wins material by force – 17 ♕xf8+ ♖xf8 18 exf6 g5 19 ♖e4+ ♔d8 20 ♘f3 ♘xf6 21 ♖e5 left Black in an extremely difficult endgame in S.Sulskis-S.Estremera Panos, Lisbon 2001) 14 f4! exf4 15 ♖ae1 0-0-0 16 ♕xf4 c4 17 d4!? is pleasant for White with his superior pieces and sound structure. It's important to note that 17...g5 can be met by 18 ♘f5 ♕d7 19 ♕e3 (19 ♕h2!? ♗xf5 20 exf5 ♕xd4+ 21 ♔h1 is an intriguing pawn sacrifice when Black has problems with his king) 19...♗xf5 20 ♖xf5 ♕xd4 21 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 22 ♖xf6 and White converted this superior endgame in A.Shirov-B.Predojevic, Sarajevo 2004.

b) 10...0-0 is a very risky approach, provoking White to start a quick kingside assault as occurred in two recent grandmaster games:

b1) 11 0-0-0 ♖d8 12 g4 was very direct and after 12...♘f8 13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 ♕e3 f6 15 ♖dg1 (15 g5 looks promising) 15...♘e6 16 ♘e2 ♘d4 17 h4 ♗e6 18 g5 ♘xe2+ (18...♘xf3 was necessary, but 19 ♕xf3 c4 20 gxf6+ ♕xf6 21 ♕e3 is very dangerous) 19 ♕xe2 ♖f8 20 h5 White was crashing through in Z.Andriasian-D.Sgnaolin, Rijeka 2010.



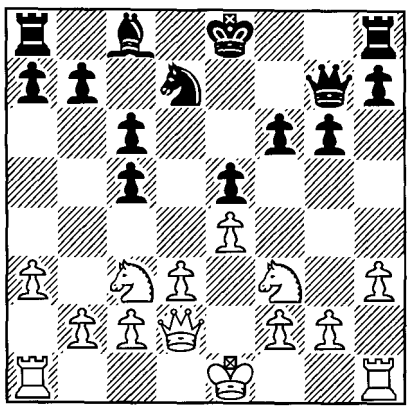
Black failed to put up much resistance: 20...f5 21 ♘xe5 fxe4 22 hxg6 hxg6 23 ♘xg6! 1-0.

b2) 11 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 12 0-0-0 b5 13 g4 a5 (if we compare this position to the critical one mentioned in the first game of this chapter, Kristjansson-Nguyen Van Huy, we see that White's attack looks to be much

faster: this is because the knight isn't so strong on d7 and fails to cover Black's king adequately) 14 ♘e2 b4 15 ♔b1 ♘b6 16 ♕e3 a4 17 ♘d2 (defending the c4-square and preparing to open the f-file) 17...♗e6 18 f4! exf4 19 ♘xf4 ♖a6 20 ♖hf1 ♖fa8? (far too ambitious) 21 ♘xe6+ fxe6 22 ♘f3! (the knight returns and eyes up the e5- and g5-squares) 22...b3 23 ♘g5 bxa2+ 24 ♔xa2 ♕d6 25 ♕xc5!? 1-0 M.Al Modiahki-C.Sochacki, Paris 2010.

c) 10...♕f8!? has been tried by Tregubov, but the queen looks rather misplaced on g7 and after 11 ♗xg7 ♕xg7, 12 a3 looks very sensible. A position from the main line has occurred except with the f-pawn still on its starting square which I think favours White. S.Kindermann-H.Ganaus, Vienna 2003, saw 12...0-0 13 b4 b6 14 0-0 ♖e8 when I like the idea of relocating the knight to c4 with 15 ♘d1!?.

11 ♗xg7 ♕xg7 12 a3



We've seen this idea before. White intends to open the queenside and put pressure on Black's a7-pawn after exchanging the a- and c-pawns. Interestingly, this is not mentioned by Rogozenko in his book and so may well catch your opponents by surprise. And, after all, it can't be a bad idea to follow Carlsen's approach. It's worth mentioning that in the *Mega Database 2010*, White has scored 6.5/7 with this little pawn more, the draw being a simultaneous game by Magnus Carlsen.

12 ♕e3, preventing the knight shifting from d7, has been the most common reply, but it's not clear that after 12...♕e7 White has really gained anything, while 12 ♘h2, preparing 13 f4, is the other main option.

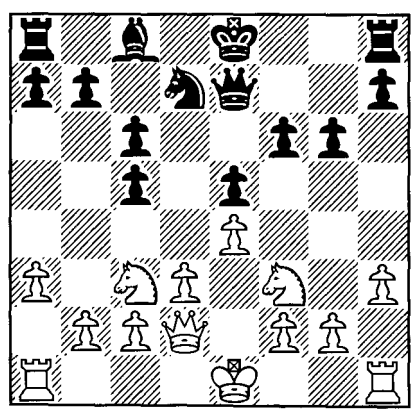
12...♘f8

Black reroutes his knight to e6, a normal plan in this structure which controls the d4- and f4-squares and gives Black a little more space, but does nothing to prevent our b2-b4 plan. Alternatively:

a) 12...a5 13 ♘h2 was similar to the Gormally-Gordon game seen below. Black tried to prevent f2-f4 with the radical 13...g5, but after 14 ♘g4 ♘b6 15 ♘e3 h5 16 h4! g4 17 ♘e2 ♗e6 18 ♘g3 ♘c8 19 0-0 ♘d6 20 b4! he had problems all over the board in A.Gallardo Garcia-J.Moreno Ruiz, Collado Villalba 2007.

b) 12...0-0 13 0-0 ♖f7 14 b4 b5 15 ♘e2 a5!? was an aggressive attempt by Black in C.Balogh-M.Erdogdu, Kusadasi 2006, which I think White should have dealt with by 16 bxa5 ♘f8 17 a4! b4 18 ♘c1 ♘e6 19 ♘b3 when he has the better chances.

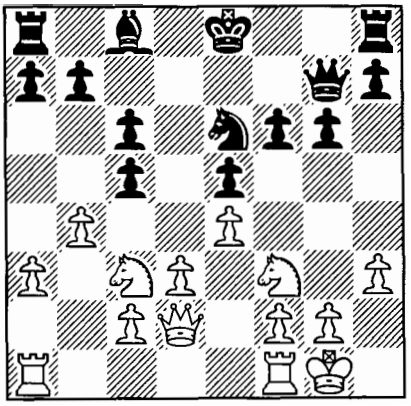
c) 12...♕e7 has been the most common:



c1) 13 ♘e2 a5 (a logical move to prevent b2-b4, but condemned by Palliser; 13...♘f8 14 b4 ♘e6 is his suggestion, holding off from making any decisions on the queenside which is similar to the game and in fact could transpose to the note to Black's 15th move after 15 0-0 0-0) 14 ♘h2 ♘f8 15 f4! exf4 16 ♕xf4 ♘e6 17 ♕e3 left Black with some problems to coordinate his pieces in D.Gormally-S.Gordon, Scarborough 2004. The insertion of a3 and ...a5 definitely favours White as Black will always have to be on the look-out for the b2-b4 break and is unable to castle queenside.

c2) 13 ♕h6!? has never been played, but looks interesting when compared to the 10...♗xh6 lines. Here we have played the rather unusual 12 a3, but perhaps that's still enough for an advantage: for example, 13...♕f8 (13...♘f8 14 ♘h4 again ties Black up) 14 ♕e3 doesn't give Black anything better than 14...♕e7 when White's a tempo up on the 12 ♕e3 line.

13 b4 ♘e6 14 0-0



14...0-0

14...a5 was tried in the aforementioned simultaneous game, but Magnus immediately exploited the weakness on b6 with 15 ♘a4! cxb4 16 axb4 axb4 in M.Carlsen-S.Adan Bermudez, Madrid (simul) 2008. Here the most precise continuation looks to be 17 ♘b6 ♖xa1 18 ♖xa1 0-0 19 ♕xb4 with promising play on the queenside.

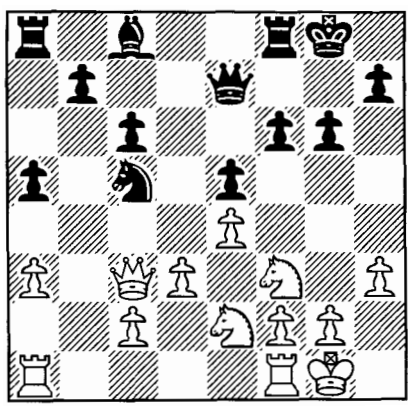
15 ♘e2

It is also possible to open up the centre immediately with 15 bxc5 ♘xc5 16 d4! exd4 (16...♘e6 17 ♘e2 exd4 18 ♘exd4 ♘xd4 19 ♘xd4 also looks more comfortable for White) 17 ♕xd4 ♕e7 18 ♖fe1 with an unusual position. White's b2-pawn is missing, but his aggressive chances on the kingside look the most relevant.

15...a5

15...♕e7 would allow Magnus to continue manoeuvring as he does in the game: 16 ♖fb1 (16 bxc5!? ♘xc5 17 a4 is quite likely to transpose to the game) 16...b6 17 ♕c3 ♗b7 18 ♘d2 ♔g7 19 ♘c4 and it's clear White has many more useful waiting moves than Black. Note that 19...♘d4 can be met by 20 ♖e1.

16 bxc5 ♘xc5 17 ♕c3 ♕e7



18 a4!

Fixing the a5-pawn. White has a small but definite advantage thanks to his play down the b-file and extra central pawn. The knights are also very useful in this blocked situation while the bishop is less so. White also has a much safer king, an important point if the position opens up.

18...♗e6 19 ♖fb1 ♖fb8 20 ♘d2

Black has no way to improve his position, so Carlsen correctly starts to position his pieces on the most efficient squares.

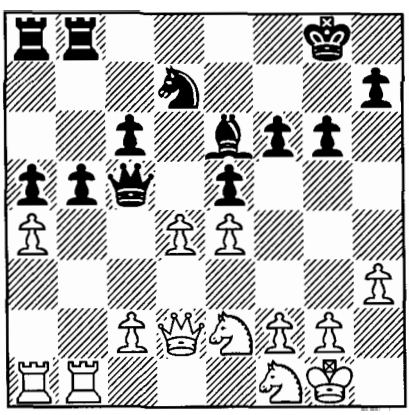
20...♘d7 21 ♘f1 ♕c5 22 ♕d2

The queen exchange would favour Black as then he would be able to create an outside passed pawn. While the queens are still on the board Black still has to be careful about his king's safety.

22...b5

Djukic's only source of counterplay, but with accurate play Carlsen shows the move to be unsound. Perhaps Black should sit with 22...♕d6, but White could continue to rearrange his forces with 23 ♘e3 ♘c5 24 ♕c3 when he has ideas such as ♘e3-c4, f2-f3 and d3-d4, and even ♖b1-f1 and f2-f4, highlighting Black's draughty king.

23 d4!



23...exd4

This leaves Black in trouble. I think Djukic had to try 23...♕b6. The position after 24 axb5 (perhaps Carlsen intended simply 24 ♘e3) 24...cxb5 25 d5 ♗f7 26 ♘c3 is complicated, but White still appears to hold the better chances. The passed a-pawn can't get very far with so many pieces on the board and the bishop is blocked out of the game on f7. Meanwhile White can start creating some kingside chances with ♘e3-g4 and 26...b4 (26...♕a6 27 g3!? is extremely unclear) 27 ♘a4 comfortably prevents Black getting any further, in view of 27...♕b5 28 ♘e3 ♘c5? 29 c4!.

24 ♘xd4 ♗c4 25 ♘e3

This increases the pressure and retains some advantage, although I don't think it is the most accurate. The simplest looks to be 25 axb5 cxb5 26 ♘b3!, forcing 26...♗xb3 27 cxb3 ♕e7 28 ♖c1! which leaves Black with problems defending a5, his seventh rank and his light squares.

25...♘e5

25...b4 should have been played when 26 ♘b3 ♗xb3 27 cxb3 ♘e5 28 ♖c1 plainly favours White thanks to his pressure against the backward c6-pawn, but it's not the end of the world for Black.

26 axb5! ♖d8!

Necessary but Magnus has it all under control. Instead after 26...cxb5 27 ♘b3 ♗xb3 28 cxb3 Black has no good way to defend his a5-pawn, so probably has to try 28...♕b4, but 29 ♕xb4 axb4 30 ♘d5 picks up a pawn and I expect Carlsen would have converted this relatively easily.

27 ♖xa5!

Very accurately calculated. White temporarily sacrifices a piece, but the b5-pawn becomes too strong.

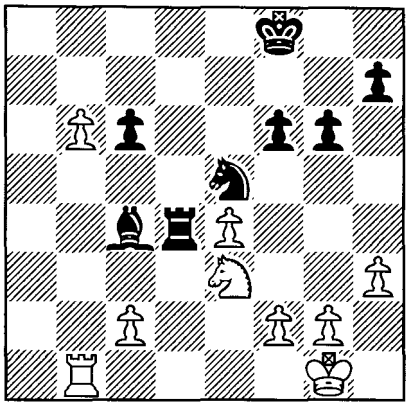
27...♖xa5 28 ♕xa5 ♖xd4

28...♕xd4 29 b6! ♗e2 30 b7 ♖b8 31 ♕c7 (31 c3!?, opening up ♕a5-a2+ ideas, also looks interesting) 31...♕a7 32 ♖b6 ♗b5 (32...♘d7 is necessary, but after 33 ♕c8+! ♘f8 34 ♕xc6 White has three pawns for the piece including that monster on b7) 33 ♔h2 leaves Black completely tied down and powerless against 34 c4.

29 ♕a8+ ♕f8 30 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 31 b6

So despite the queen exchange Black must still give a piece for the b-pawn when

he'll be a pawn down in the endgame.



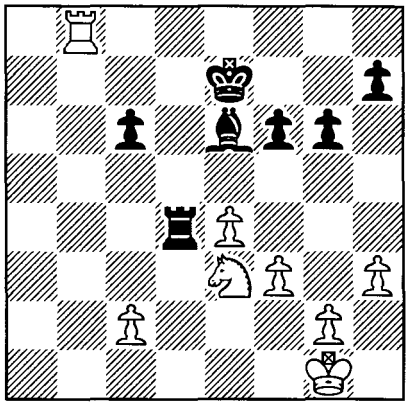
31...♘d7

31...♗a6 32 b7 ♗xb7 33 ♖xb7 ♖xe4 was Black's best bet, with reasonable drawing chances after 34 ♖xh7 ♘c4, although White can keep up the pressure with 35 ♖d7!? ♘xe3 36 fxe3 ♖xe3 37 ♖d6.

32 b7

I imagine some time trouble issues were starting to affect the players at this point. 32 ♖b4! is more accurate.

32...♗e6 33 b8♕+ ♘xb8 34 ♖xb8+ ♔e7 35 f3



The dust has settled and White has been left in an endgame with an extra pawn which Carlsen converts with the minimum of fuss.

35...♖d7 36 h4 ♔d6 37 ♔f2 ♔e5 38 ♖e8 ♔d6 39 ♔g3 ♗f7 40 ♖h8 ♗e6 41 ♔f4 h5 42 g4! hxg4 43 ♘xg4 ♗xg4 44 fxg4 ♖g7 45 ♖h6 ♔c5 46 e5! g5+ 47 hxg5 fxe5+ 48 ♔xe5 ♖xg5+ 49 ♔f4 ♖g8 50 g5 ♔d5 51 g6 ♔e6 52 ♔g5 1-0

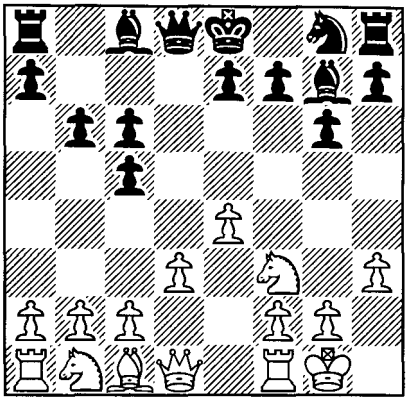
Game 43
E.Sutovsky-R.Mamedov
Baku (rapid) 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 d3 ♗g7 6 h3 b6!?

A fashionable way to defend the c5-pawn which is the speciality of the Greek Grandmaster Vassilios Kotronias.

Instead 6...♘h6 7 0-0 b6 (7...f6 8 ♗e3 b6 9 a4 also transposes) 8 a4 transposes to note 'a' to Black's 7th move, below.

7 0-0



This is more flexible than the more popular 7 ♘c3, as our knight may want to develop via d2 as, indeed, it does in the game.

7...e5

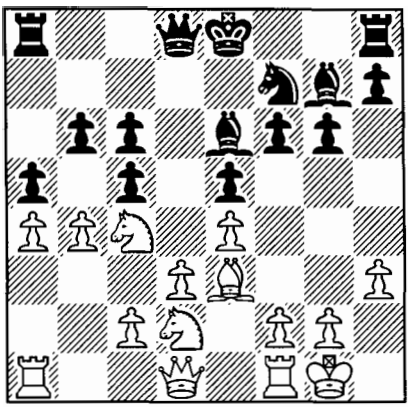
a) 7...♘h6!? is an interesting deployment which we saw for the first time in the previous chapter. Black intends ...f6 and ...♘h6-f7. Recently Bologan came up with a

new idea for White with 8 a4 a5 (not worrying about the impeding a4-a5 with 8...0-0 allows White a comfortable advantage with 9 a5 ♗a6 10 ♖e1 f6 11 e5! ♘f7 12 e6!? ♘e5 13 ♗f4 ♕d5 14 ♘bd2 ♕xe6, as in S.Zhigalko-A.Iljushin, Moscow 2010, when 15 ♗xe5 fxe5 16 ♖e4 b5 17 ♕e2 leaves Black with an abominable structure) 9 ♗e3!. As Bologan explains, this was the idea behind 8 a4; now it is too risky to take on b2:

a1) 9...♗xb2?! 10 ♘bd2! is extremely risky for Black (10 ♘a3 comes to the same thing, since 10...♘g8 11 ♘c4 ♗xa1 12 ♕xa1 f6 13 ♖b1, as given by Bologan, gives White wonderful compensation). He could try 10...♗g7, but after 11 ♖b1 ♖a6 12 ♘c4 both the b6-pawn and knight on h6 are problematic.

a2) 9...f6 10 ♘a3 e5 11 ♘c4 ♗e6 12 ♘fd2 and now:

a21) Against 12...♘f7, Bologan mentions the strong 13 b4!

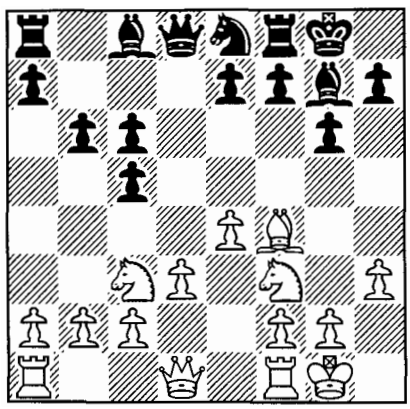


13...axb4 14 a5 bxa5 15 ♗xc5 ♗f8 16 ♗b6 ♕b8 17 ♗xa5 ♗e7 18 ♗b6 with an edge.

a22) Against 12...0-0 it seems to me the idea still works: 13 b4! axb4 14 a5 bxa5 15 ♗xc5 ♖e8 16 ♖a4! with a strong bind.

a23) 12...♖a6 13 f4 exf4 14 ♗xf4 ♘f7 was played in V.Bologan-S.Zhigalko, Budva 2009 when Bologan reckons that 15 ♘e3, preventing any counterplay in the shape of ...f6-f5, would have been the most accurate, with a pleasant edge as Black lacks a plan.

b) 7...♘f6 8 ♘c3 could also be reached by way of 6...♘f6 7 ♘c3 b6 8 0-0. White is committed to a plan with castling kingside, but his bishop is free to develop elsewhere. After 8...0-0 I quite like 9 ♗f4!?, exploiting Black's move order, and this seems to be the critical test. After 9...♘e8 White has:

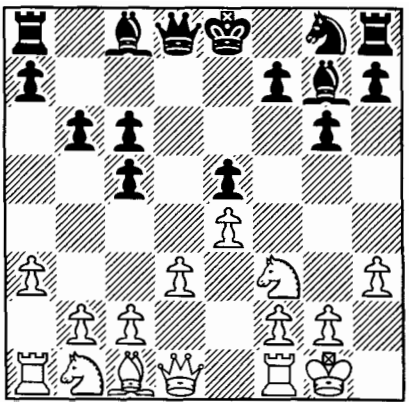


b1) 10 ♕d2 has previously been the main move: 10...f6 (10...♘c7 doesn't trouble White: 11 ♗h6 ♘e6 12 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 13 ♘e2 ♕d6 14 ♘h2 – 14 e5!? ♕d7 15 ♕e3 is an alternative plan when we could follow up with our plan of a2-a3 and b2-b4 – 14...♘d4 15 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 16 c3 ♕d6 17 f4 ♗a6 18 ♖f3 f6 19 f5! was very promising in G.Meier-T.Hirneise, Saarbruecken 2009) 11 e5 fxe5 12 ♗xe5 (12 ♘xe5 ♕d4 13 ♘e2 ♕xb2 seems okay for Black) 12...♗xh3 (12...♖xf3!? 13 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 14 gxf3 ♕f8 also provides Black with good compensation) 13 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 14 ♖fe1 ♗e6 was satisfactory for the leading Russian in A.Shirov-V.Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2004.

b2) Adams recently played a nuance with 10 a4 a5 and only now 11 ♕d2. After

11...f6 in M.Adams-N.Pert, Canterbury 2010, he could have followed Shirov's example with 12 e5!, with the point that 12...fxe5 13 ♘xe5! (13 ♗xe5 ♗xh3 would be very similar to the previous note) 13...♕d4 14 ♘e2! has the difference that the pawn on b2 cannot be taken as the queen gets trapped.

8 a3



8...a5

Black doesn't always rule out our plan of b2-b4:

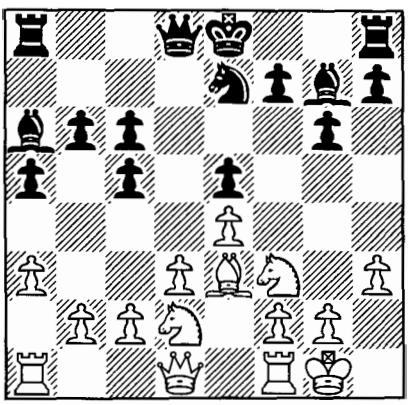
a) I have seven games on my database with 8...f6, six of them with Kotronias as Black! Kotronias evidently believes in it, but I'm not convinced. White will be able to expand on the queenside and while Black can create a solid set-up on the kingside I believe our queenside play is easier to achieve: 9 b4 cxb4 10 axb4 ♘h6 11 c4!? (the d3-pawn looks vulnerable, but Black has no way to exploit it) 11...♘f7 12 ♘c3 0-0 has been reached twice, most recently in S.Zhigalko-V.Kotronias, Dresden Olympiad 2008. I think we should carve out a square on d5 with 13 b5!? cxb5 (both 13...c5 14 ♘d5 f5 15 ♗b2 and 13...♗b7 14 bxc6 ♗xc6 15 ♘d5 leave White dominant thanks to his strong knight) 14 ♘xb5 f5 15 ♕e2 and I don't really see Black's kingside play going anywhere, whilst we have open lines for our pieces. However, 15 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 16 ♘xa7 ♗b7 would allow Black some counterplay against our centre.

b) Being content to simply develop the pieces spells trouble for Black and following 8...♘e7 9 b4 cxb4 10 axb4 0-0 11 ♗b2 ♕c7 12 ♘bd2 ♗e6 13 ♖a3 he is under unpleasant pressure on the queenside and lacking any counterplay. Here Black has tried 13...c5, but after the 14 bxc5 ♕xc5 15 ♕a1! ♘c6 16 ♖c3 ♕b5 17 ♖b1 a5 18 ♗a3 ♘b4 19 ♕b2 ♖fc8 20 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 of T.Hillarp Persson-M.Devereaux, Gibraltar 2008, 21 ♘e1! threatening 22 c3 would have picked up a pawn for free.

9 ♗e3 ♘e7 10 ♘bd2!

The knight is far better placed here than on c3. We plan on jumping the knight into c4, from where it targets e5 and b6, thereby making b2-b4 a serious threat. Black hasn't found a comfortable method of dealing with these threats.

10...♗a6



Mamedov keeps faith with this move, dissuading the knight jump into c4.

10...a4 has been tried more often, but Anand's 11 b4! looks very powerful (11 ♘c4 used to be the main move here). V.Anand-T.Radjabov, Nice (blindfold) 2009, continued 11...axb3 (11...cxb4 12 ♘c4! b5 13 ♗b6

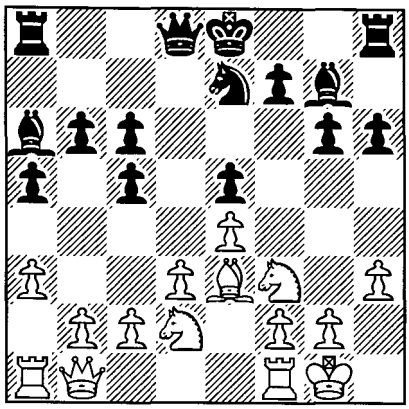
♕d7 14 ♘cxe5 ♕b7 15 ♗d4 f6 16 ♘g4 ♗xg4 17 hxg4 bxa3 18 g5 0-0 19 ♖xa3 followed by 20 ♕a1 leaves White with strong pressure) 12 ♘xb3 (suddenly Black has problems dealing with the threat of a3-a4-a5) 12...f5 13 a4 f4 14 ♗d2 (14 ♗c1!? is possibly a nuance; the bishop can go to the long diagonal anyway and now the queen can join in on c3) 14...♕d6 15 ♗c3 ♖b8 16 ♕b1! and Black was losing a pawn by force. Radjabov tried to randomize with 16...g5, but 17 ♕b2 ♘g6 18 ♘bd2! (continuing to aim for the e5-pawn) 18...b5 19 axb5 cxb5 20 ♖a7 ♗f6 21 ♗a5! ♕c6 22 ♖c7 ♕d6 23 ♘c4! was not at all pretty for him..

11 ♕b1!

A strange-looking move but logical nonetheless. Sutovsky simply prepares the b2-b4 advance.

11...a4?!

A new try but amazingly this loses a pawn by force. 11...h6 was Mamedov's previous try, but he wasn't successful:



a) 12 b4 f5 is evidently the idea, attempting to trap the e3-bishop, although after 13 ♕b2! 0-0 14 ♕b3+ ♔h7 15 ♘c4 I would still prefer to have the white pieces.

b) 12 ♕a2 0-0 13 ♘c4 ♕c7 14 b4 is also very pleasant for White.

c) 12 ♘c4!? and then:

c1) 12...f5?! (trying to generate counterplay, but Black is left with a lousy position) 13 ♕a2! ♗xc4 14 ♕xc4 a4 15 b4! and Black's position collapsed in A.Zhigalko-R.Mamedov, Moscow 2009.

c2) 12...♗xc4 13 dxc4 ♕c7 14 b4 is the same as variation 'c3'.

c3) A plan with taking on c4 is necessary: 12...♕c7 13 b4 (13 ♕a2 would transpose to variation 'b', above) 13...♗xc4 but White has a pleasant, risk-free advantage after 14 dxc4 axb4 15 axb4 ♖xa1 16 ♕xa1 cxb4 17 ♕a8+ ♘c8 18 ♕a4 0-0 19 c5 b5 20 ♕xb4 with a continuing space advantage on the queenside and the more active pieces. He can choose when he wants to break with c2-c4.

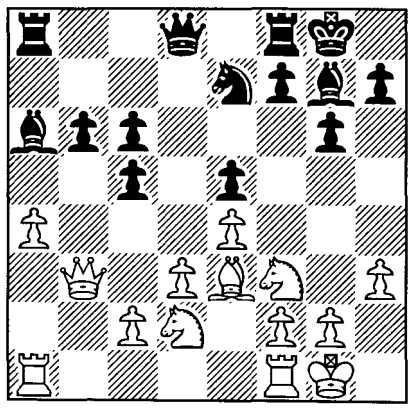
12 b4!

Black's last didn't prevent this move and in fact we get a position very similar to that of Anand-Radjabov seen in the note to Black's 10th, above.

12...axb3

12...cxb4 13 ♕xb4 b5 would keep the material level, but that bishop on a6 looks ridiculous and Black's dark squares are crippled. White could continue with something like 14 ♗c5 ♗c8 15 ♖ad1 ♗e6 16 d4! when Black is already lost.

13 ♕xb3 0-0 14 a4!



A very simple plan, but surprisingly effective. As we will see, once White breaks with a4-a5, forcing Black to move his b-pawn, then the c5-pawn drops and with it White wins entry into Black's dark squares. The a5-pawn will then be too weak to fend for itself and that too will fall, leaving White materially and positionally better. Let's see how it worked out in practice against a player who, at the time of writing, is rated 80th in the world.

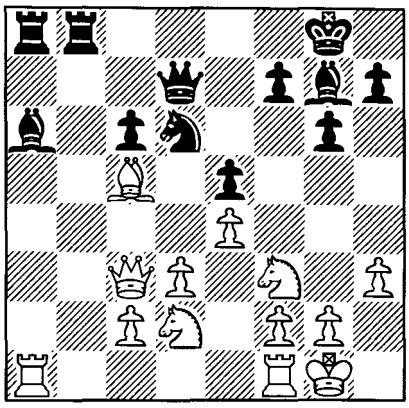
14...♕c7 15 a5 bxa5 16 ♗xc5 ♖fb8 17 ♕a3

There falls the a5-pawn and White will still have continued pressure.

17...♘c8 18 ♕xa5 ♕d7

18...♕xa5 19 ♖xa5 is a hopeless endgame as the pin on the a-file stops Black getting even a whiff of counterplay.

19 ♕c3 ♘d6



Mamedov offers a second pawn in pursuit of counterplay. 19...♕c7 20 ♖a3 ♗b5 21 ♖fa1 would be totally hopeless.

20 ♗xd6!?

A good practical decision, especially in a rapid game. Sutovsky says an extra pawn is sufficient to win the game and doesn't want it to get messy. That said, 20 ♘xe5 was completely fine: 20...♕e6 21 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 22 ♘df3 is just an extra couple of pawns, although I can understand White feeling uneasy about the pin along the long diagonal.

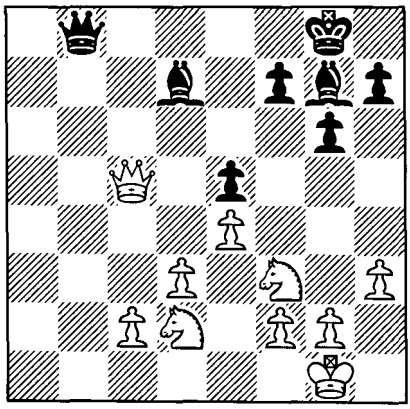
20...♕xd6 21 ♖a5 ♗b5?!

21...♗c8 would at least keep the c-pawn, but 22 ♘c4 ♕c7 would give White a choice between maintaining the pressure with 23 ♖fa1 or grabbing another pawn with 23 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 24 ♘cxe5.

22 ♖fa1 ♖xa5 23 ♕xa5

Due to the threat to the bishop, Black is forced to concede a further pawn.

23...c5 24 ♖b1 ♗d7 25 ♖xb8+ ♕xb8 26 ♕xc5



White is simply two pawns up and Black has absolutely no play at all. Mamedov continues as it's rapid chess, but the result should never be in doubt.

26...h6 27 ♔h2 ♗e6 28 ♘c4 ♗f8 29 ♕xe5

Perhaps Mamedov was consoling himself here that the more pawns he loses the more open lines there are for his bishops? It's now three pawns and counting.

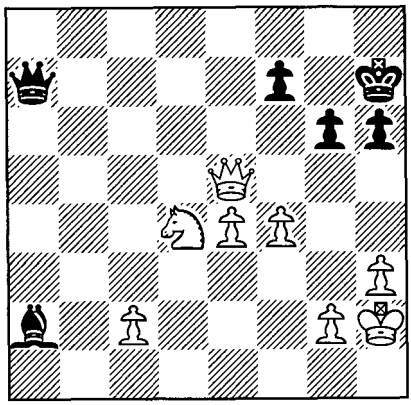
29...♕a7 30 ♕d4

30 ♘e3! would keep the position completely under control.

30...♗c5 31 ♕d8+ ♔h7 32 d4 ♗xc4 33 dxc5 ♕xc5

So one pawn has dropped back, but White has got rid of Black's bishop-pair which was his only source of counterplay.

34 ♕d4 ♕c7+ 35 ♕e5 ♕a7 36 ♘d4 ♗a2 37 f4!



Very much in Sutovsky's style, he decides to try and mate Mamedov, rather than convert his extra material in a conservative manner.

37...♕a3 38 f5 g5 39 ♕c7 ♔g8 40 e5?!

This complicates the position unduly, a sure sign of the flags hanging. 40 ♘e2!, rerouting the knight to g3 and thence to h5, was a quick win.

40...♕e3 41 e6! fxe6 42 ♕d8+ ♔f7 43 fxe6+

Better 43 ♕d6!.

43...♗xe6 44 ♕c7+ ♔g8 45 ♕b8+ ♔f7?

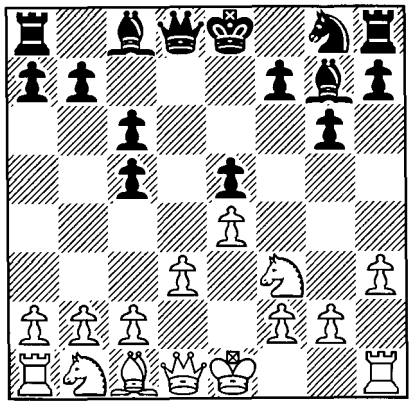
Mamedov allows the exchange of queens which ends the contest. 45...♔g7 should have been played when White would be winning, but it would still take a while.

46 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 47 ♕b3! 1-0

Game 44
S.Zhigalko-A.Deszczynski
Warsaw 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 d3 ♗g7 6 h3 e5

Black's second most-common move after 6...♘f6. The positions which arise are similar, but the location of the black knight changes things a little.



7 0-0

7 ♗e3 ♕e7 8 ♕d2 ♘f6 9 ♗h6 0-0 is the main line which is similar to those lines examined in Carlsen-Djukic, but this is a better version for Black because the knight is actually better placed on f6, so in reality Black has gained a tempo and a half! One high-powered clash continued 10 ♘c3 ♘h5 11 ♘e2 ♗xh6 12 ♕xh6 c4 13 0-0 cxd3 14 cxd3 f6 15 ♕d2 c5 16 a3 b6 17 b4 ♗a6 and Black had nothing to worry about in P.Svidler-E.Sutovsky, Tilburg 1996.

7...♕e7

Alternatively:

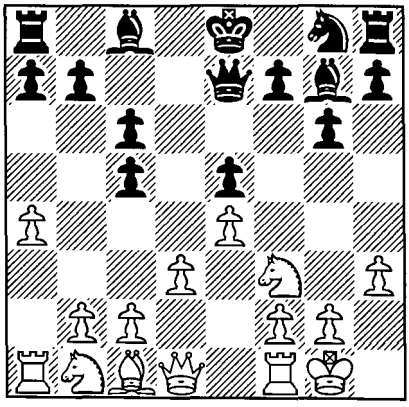
a) 7...♘e7 has been tried by Svidler amongst others, but doesn't appear to be a perfect set-up and Oratovsky goes as far as awarding the move dubious status. In fact after 8 a3 a5 9 ♗e3 b6 10 ♘bd2 we would have transposed to our last game, Sutovsky-Mamedov, in which Black failed to solve his opening difficulties.

b) 7...f6 strikes me as a rather artificial method of developing: 8 ♗e3 ♕e7 (8...b6 9 a3 ♗e6 10 b4 cxb4 11 axb4 ♘e7 12 ♘c3 0-0 13 ♕d2 ♕d7 14 ♗h6 ♖ad8 15 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 16 ♕e3 left White in complete control in J.Klein-A.Zozulia, Zurich 2004), and now 9

♕d2 strikes me as sensible, preventing Black developing his kingside knight: 9...♗e6 10 ♕c3 forced Black to play the miserable 10...♗f8 in C.Philippe-P.Emmenecker, French League 1996 (10...b6 11 b4! is the problem), when White of course had a clear advantage.

c) 7...♘f6? just loses a pawn here, as 8 ♘xe5 ♘xe4? 9 ♖e1! wins a piece.

8 a4!?



Zhigalko chooses to immediately play on the queenside, aiming to exploit Black's rather laboured kingside development.

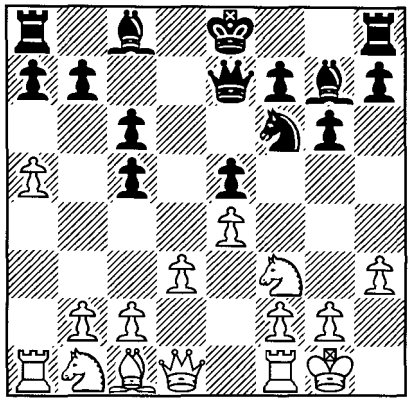
8 a3 is again a reasonable alternative plan. The position is very similar to that examined in Sutovsky-Mamedov, but the queen on e7 gives Black more flexibility: 8...♘f6 9 ♘bd2 0-0 10 b4 ♘d7 11 ♘c4 b6 and now 12 ♕e1!? is an interesting idea, bringing the queen to c3. After 12...♗a6 13 ♕c3 ♖ae8 14 ♖e1 h6 15 bxc5 ♘xc5 16 a4 ♘b7 17 ♗b2 ♗xc4 18 ♕xc4 ♘a5 19 ♕a6 ♕b7 20 ♕xb7 ♘xb7 in T.Gharamian-P.Vavrak, Cappelle la Grande 2008, 21 a5! would have left White with a clear advantage.

8...♘f6

8...a5 would prevent Zhigalko's plan of queenside expansion, but leave Black with a vulnerable b6-square. Following 9 ♘a3 ♘f6 10 ♘c4 ♘d7 11 ♗e3 0-0 12 ♕d2 b6 13 ♗h6 ♗a6 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 in N.Delgado Ramirez-D.Stamenkovic, Havana 2008, 15 ♘e3 would have kept White with the upper hand. Again Black struggles to find any play of his own. He could try 15...f5, but following 16 exf5 gxf5 17 ♖fe1 ♕f6 18 ♕c3 Black's hanging pawns are starting to look vulnerable.

Instead 8...b6 doesn't look at all logical to me, as it just helps us with our plan: 9 a5! b5 was I.Leventic-A.Jankovic, Pula 2000, when White could try the interesting 10 ♕e1!?, with the idea of 10...♘f6 11 ♕c3 ♘d7 12 ♗e3 (or 12 b4!? with promising queenside play) 12...0-0 13 ♘bd2 and Black struggles to keep hold of the c5-pawn.

9 a5



The logical continuation of the previous move. With the pawn on a5, it will be harder for Black to defend the weak c5-pawn.

9...♘d7

Neither are the alternatives ideal for Black:

a) 9...0-0 10 ♗e3 (10 ♗g5!? is an interesting idea, aiming for two knights versus two bishops in a closed position) allows Black to get rid of his extra c-pawn with 10...c4, although 11 ♘bd2 cxd3 12 cxd3 ♖d8

13 ♕c2 ♘e8 (13...♕d6 14 d4 exd4 15 ♗xd4 would keep up the pressure), as in L.Pergel-A.Bagonyai, Hungarian League 2004, and then 14 ♖fd1 would have left White for choice as Black's queenside pawns are still under a lot of pressure.

b) 9...c4 would also manage to get rid of the weak pawn, but at the cost of losing further time: 10 ♗g5 cxd3 11 ♕xd3 0-0 12 ♘bd2 h6 13 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 ♕c3 leaves White's knights superior to Black's bishops.

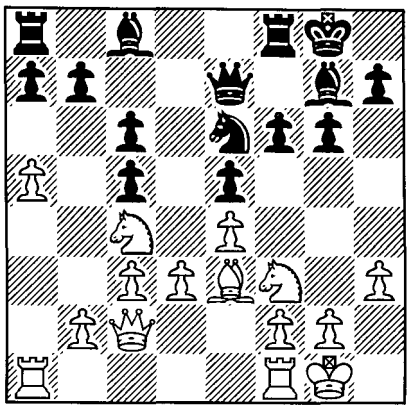
10 ♘bd2!

Again we see an advantage in remaining flexible with the knight. c4 is a very strong square here, as it will be extremely difficult to shift.

10...♘f8 11 ♘c4 f6

Hardly desirable, but otherwise Black cannot use the e6-square.

12 ♗e3 ♘e6 13 c3 0-0 14 ♕c2



Zhigalko must have been pleased with his opening. He has expanded on the queenside and prevented both of Black's plans: to play on the b-file and to break with ...f7-f5. Therefore Black's play has been successfully neutralized and he must wait, while White can continue pressing.

14...♔h8

Perhaps Black could have tried something like 14...♖d8 15 ♖ab1 ♘f4 16 ♖fd1 ♗e6, although after 17 b3 it's not clear how he continues, since 17...♗xc4 18 bxc4 ♘e6 19 ♖b2 is clearly in White's favour, while if White were feeling ambitious, he could also try 19 d4!? cxd4 20 cxd4 exd4 21 ♘xd4 with the better chances.

15 ♖ab1 ♕c7 16 b4!

White's queenside ideas play themselves here.

16...cxb4 17 cxb4 f5

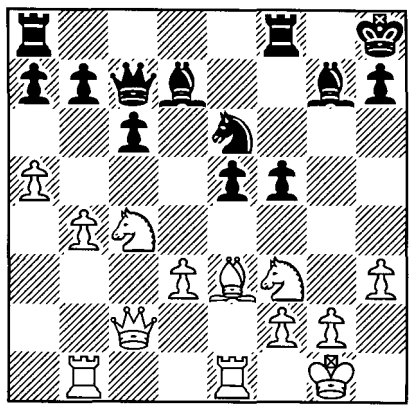
Deszczynski feels he can't wait to be suffocated and so correctly tries for some counterplay.

18 exf5 gxf5

This leaves Black's hanging e5-pawn extremely vulnerable. 18...♖xf5 looks ugly, but was a better bet. Black now has ideas of ...♖f5xf3 and so I think 19 ♘fd2 should be played. Black can try repairing his structure with 19...♘d4, but 20 ♗xd4 exd4 21 ♖fe1 leaves White much better strategically.

19 ♖fe1! ♗d7

19...♖g8 can be dealt with in the same way as the game with 20 ♗d2.



20 ♗d2

This forces Black to shatter his pawns and leaves him virtually lost strategically. However, 20 ♗c5! was also very strong: 20...♘xc5 21 bxc5 ♖ae8 22 ♘d6 ♖e7 23 ♖xb7 ♕xa5 24 ♕c1 and Black drops mate-

rial as if he were to make a waiting move, such as 24...♗f6, then after 25 ♘xe5! ♗xe5 26 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 27 ♕h6! White's attack would be decisive.

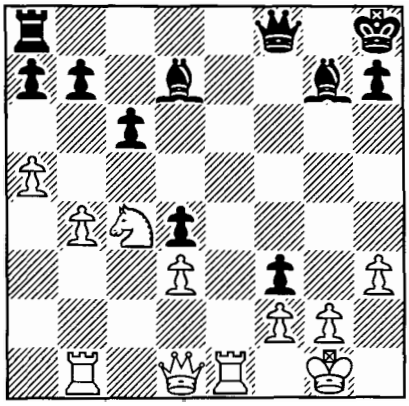
20...♘d4 21 ♘xd4 exd4 22 ♗g5 f4

Black decides to sacrifice the exchange for some play, but Zhigalko easily neutralizes any aggressive ideas. 22...♖ae8 is natural, but 23 ♗e7 ♖g8 24 ♗d6 ♕d8 25 a6! ♖xe1+ 26 ♖xe1 bxa6 27 ♘e5 ♗e8 28 ♕xc6! would leave Black crippled.

23 ♗e7 f3

23...♖f7 24 ♗d6 ♕d8 25 ♘e5 would leave White in complete control. It's worth pointing out that 25...♖f6?! 26 ♗e7! ♕xe7 27 ♘g6+ ♖xg6 28 ♖xe7 ♗xh3 29 f3 wins.

24 ♗d6 ♕d8 25 ♗xf8 ♕xf8 26 ♕d1!



A sensible practical decision. The black pawn can be used to shelter the White king. Instead 26 g4 looks somewhat risky, but the silicon-blooded computer states White is winning.

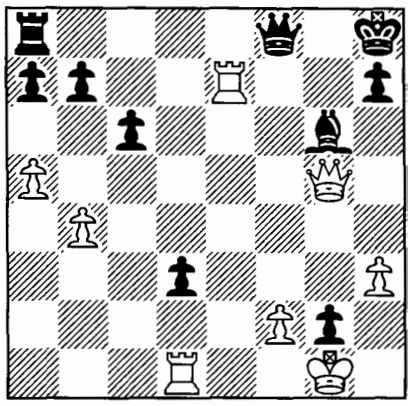
26...fxg2 27 ♕h5 ♗f5 28 ♘e5!

Allowing Black to win another pawn, but as we shall see, White's attack on the dark squares becomes too strong.

28...♗xe5

What else? White threatened ♘e5-f7+.

29 ♖xe5 ♗xd3 30 ♖d1 ♗g6 31 ♕g5 d3 32 ♖e7

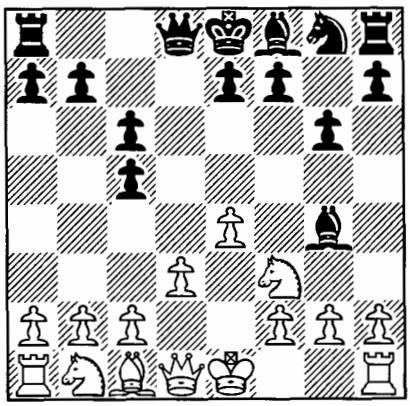


Material may be roughly level now, but White has retaken complete control of the position.

32...♖d8 33 ♕e5+ ♔g8 34 ♖xb7 ♖e8 35 ♕g3 ♔h8 36 a6! ♗e4 37 ♖e1 ♗g6 38 ♖xe8 1-0

Game 45
M.Adams-G.Meins
European Club Cup,
Ohrid 2009

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 d3 ♗g4



This is a rather unambitious approach. Black is content to exchange off his light-squared bishop, but this just condemns

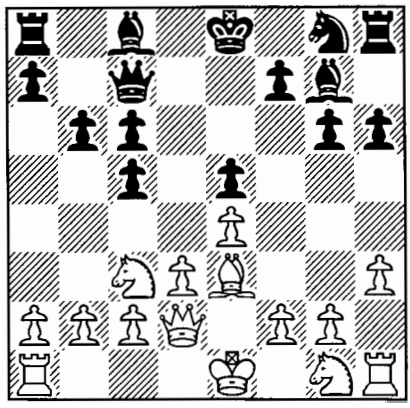
him to a slightly worse position with few prospects. We should discuss Black's other rare fifth-move alternatives too:

a) 5...f6?! is a rare try that was once tried by Krasenkow in an important match up against Anand, but he soon regretted it. Anand now went for the critical 6 e5! ♗g4 7 exf6 exf6 8 h3 ♗e6 (8...♗xf3 9 ♕xf3 leaves Black in an unpleasant position that has no pluses) 9 0-0 ♕d7 10 ♗e3 ♘h6 11 ♘c3 b6 12 ♘e4, which already left Black in a terrible position. Krasenkow now tried the ridiculous 12...♘g8, but didn't last long: 13 ♖e1 0-0-0 14 a4 ♗d5 15 a5 ♔b7? (15...♗xe4 was forced, but the endgame after 16 dxe4 ♕xd1 17 ♖exd1 looks so good for White that it must be winning) 16 axb6 axb6 17 c4! ♗xe4 18 ♕a4! ♖b8 19 dxe4 ♗d6 20 ♖ed1 ♕e6 21 ♕a7+ ♔c8 22 ♕g7 1-0 V.Anand-M.Krasenkow, Moscow (rapid) 1996.

b) 5...b6 6 0-0 ♗g7 7 h3 would transpose to Sutovsky-Mamedov.

c) 5...♕c7 is occasionally tried here and over the next few moves, and is the most important possibility not already covered. However, I find this move rather slow and it's likely we will merely transpose into a position already covered, but with Black's queen committed to a less active square. Now 6 h3 ♗g7 (6...e5 allows the bishop to develop to e7 or d6, but it's hardly clear that's a good thing: 7 ♗e3 f6 8 ♕d2 ♗d6 9 ♕c3! b6 10 ♘a3 ♗e6 11 ♘c4 ♘e7 12 0-0 g5 13 a3! 0-0 14 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 15 b4 certainly left something to be desired from Black's opening experiment in I.Teran Alvarez-S.Gonzalez de la Torre, Mondariz 2002) 7 ♘c3 and then:

c1) 7...e5 8 ♗e3 b6 9 ♕d2 h6 is an independent try for Black. The position resembles the illustrative game Sutovsky-Baron, but here Black's knight is still on its starting square on g8. Borrowing an idea I mentioned there, White has tried 10 ♘g1!? (although playing à la Sutovsky, with 10 0-0 ♘e7 11 ♘h2 ♗e6 12 f4 exf4 13 ♗xf4, also looks reasonable).



Now 10...♘e7 11 f4 ♗e6 12 ♘f3 0-0-0 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 fxe5 g5 was seen in P.Jaracz-Z.Kozul, Warsaw 2005, when 15 h4 ♕xe5 16 hxg5 hxg5 17 0-0-0 gives White a pleasant advantage, especially considering that 17...f6?! 18 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 19 d4! wins a pawn.

c2) 7...♘f6 8 ♗e3 b6 (8...♘d7 doesn't really make sense to me as ...♕c7 and ...♘d7 don't go too well together and after 9 ♕d2 Black is basically a tempo down on the 7...♘d7 lines examined in Sutovsky-Baron and Carlsen-Djukic) 9 ♕d2 e5 10 ♗h6 0-0 (10...♗xh6 11 ♕xh6 ♗e6 has been tried three times as far as I can see and with good results for Black, but objectively this way of playing must be dubious: 12 ♕g7 – forcing the king to commit to the centre – 12...♔e7 13 ♕h6 ♘d7 14 ♘g5 ♕d6 was M.Venkatesh-S.Himanshu, New Delhi 2007, when 15 f4! exf4 16 0-0 looks extremely dangerous) 11 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 12 g4 ♘e8 13 0-0-0 f6 14 ♖dg1 gave White a very dangerous-looking attack in E.Sutovsky-V.Kotronias, Buenos Aires 1997.

6 ♘bd2!

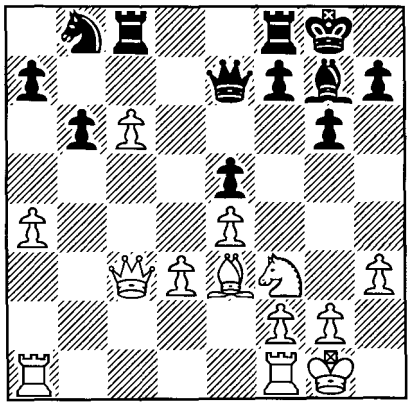
This was the point behind delaying ♘b1-c3. White can connect his knights and thus keep his pieces well coordinated.

6...♗g7

6...e5 7 h3 ♗xf3 8 ♘xf3 f6 9 ♗e3 ♘h6 10 0-0 ♘f7 11 c3 ♗d6 12 a3 ♕e7 13 b4 was pleasant for White who had succeeded in starting his queenside play in M.Brodsky-U.Akcan, Izmir 2003.

7 h3 ♗xf3 8 ♘xf3 ♘f6

8...e5 was tried in S.Sulskis-G.Agamaliev, Bydgoszcz 1999, but Sulskis showed an optimal plan: 9 ♗e3 ♕e7 10 0-0 ♘f6 11 a3 0-0 12 ♕d2 b6 13 b4 c4 14 ♕c3 cxd3 15 cxd3 ♖ac8 16 a4 c5 and here 17 bxc5 ♘d7 18 c6 ♘b8 was evidently the reason Sulskis declined to capture on c5 (instead 18...♘c5 19 ♗xc5 bxc5 20 ♘d2 ♖xc6 21 ♘c4 leaves White with a classic good knight versus bad bishop scenario).



Indeed, 19 a5! ♘xc6 (19...♖xc6 20 ♕b3 ♕c7 21 axb6 axb6 22 ♖fc1 leaves White clearly better with his open files on the queenside; Black also has to watch out for tactics against f7) 20 axb6 ♘d4 looks dangerous, but 21 ♖xa7! is a clever move, leaving White with an overwhelming advantage: for example, 21...♕xa7 22 ♕xc8 ♕xb6 23 ♗xd4 exd4 24 ♕c4 with an extra pawn, while the knight is better than the bishop with pawns on just one side of the board.

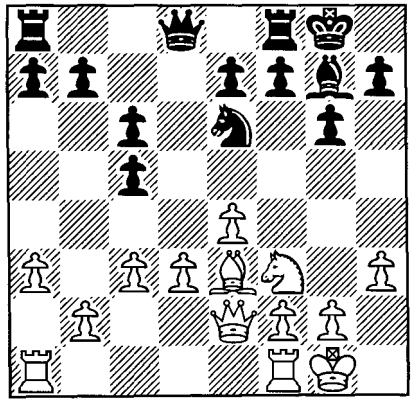
9 ♕e2 ♘d7 10 0-0 ♘f8

10...e5 was tried the previous times this position was reached. A typical position has been reached, but with the light-squared bishop exchanged. This means that Black has more space for his remaining pieces, but he doesn't have his long-term compensation in the shape of the bishop-pair. Thus Black only has his structural weakness and must suffer indefinitely: 11 ♗e3 ♕e7 12 c3 (12 a3 ♘f8 13 b4! is the alternative) 12...♘f8 13 a3 ♘e6 14 b4 0-0 15 ♖fd1 b6 16 ♕b2 ♖fe8 showed White's queenside play developing normally in R.Ovetchkin-V.Vasiliev, Tula 2003. I think I would continue with 17 a4 here.

11 a3

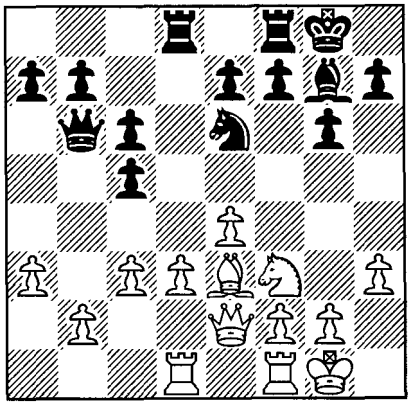
Considering the course of the game, 11 c3 looks more logical, but is probably not very important as tempi are not so relevant here as Black struggles to come up with a plan.

11...♘e6 12 c3 0-0 13 ♗e3



This is a typical Adams position. White has a small but solid advantage thanks to his superior pawn structure. He can plan to play either b2-b4 or f2-f4, while Black has no targets to attack and must simply wait.

13...♕b6 14 ♖ad1 ♖ad8



15 ♘h2!

We've seen this move in various positions this chapter. Adams prepares f2-f4, which only gains in strength thanks to Black's knight being on e6 here.

15...♖d6 16 f4 f5

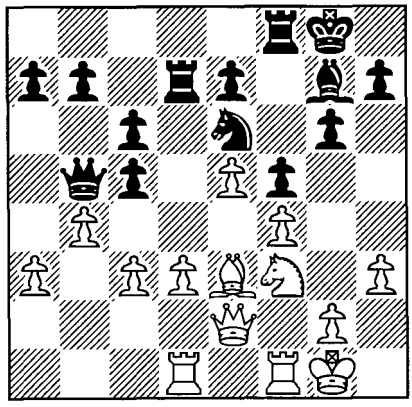
Not a pretty move, but obligatory as otherwise White's pawns will roll ever onwards on the kingside.

17 ♘f3 ♕b5?!

This leaves Black's queen in a very awkward situation. 17...♕b3 should have been played to prevent Adams subsequent b2-b4, although Black's position is still unpleasant. White can continue his waiting with 18 g3, leaving Black without a productive plan.

Instead trying to grab the f-pawn with 17...fxe4 18 dxe4 ♘xf4? (18...♖xd1 19 ♖xd1 ♘xf4?! 20 ♕c4+ ♔h8 21 ♘g5 is similar) 19 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 20 ♕c4+ ♔h8 21 ♘g5! leaves White with far too strong an attack.

18 e5 ♖d7 19 b4!



19...b6??

Black's position was starting to become extremely difficult, but this loses at once. 19...♕a4 was necessary, but 20 ♕a2 ♖d5 21 bxc5 ♘xf4 22 d4 leaves White completely dominant.

20 ♕a2! 1-0

Conclusion

With 4...dxc6 Black acknowledges he is slightly worse, but tries to equalize slowly. The lines are very popular, but I believe White has good chances. Perhaps the most important line, from a theoretical point of view, is the positional pawn sacrifice seen in the first game in the chapter, Kristjansson-Nguyen Van Huy. However, these positions are certainly easier for White to play with his simple strategic plans.

Chapter Seven
Rossolimo Variation: 3...e6

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 e6

Although 3...g6 is played around two and a half times more often, this move is also seen frequently. The arising positions tend to be much more complex than after 3...g6. This is due to the fact that Black can create a big central pawn mass and if we're not careful he'll be able to generate a powerful initiative. I advocate capturing on c6 immediately before Black gets time to play ...♘g8-e7.

4 ♗xc6 bxc6

Black has long-term structural problems. The move ...d7-d5 leaves both c-pawns vulnerable, while ...d6 can often be met by e4-e5, trying to isolate and further weaken the c-pawns. Black often aims for a structure with ...d6, ...e5 and ...f7-f5, but a well-timed e4-e5 can generally prevent that. In return Black hopes to generate an initiative, but it is a rather-risky strategy. He also has a few problems developing his kingside pieces.

5 b3

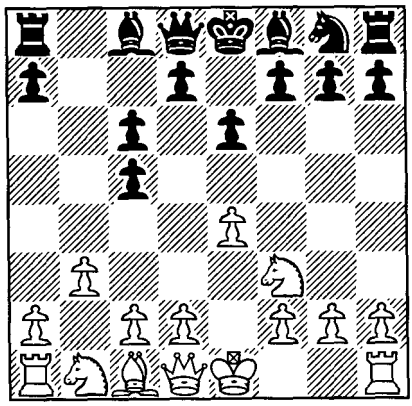
I've decided this is the way to go. Although it is still somewhat of a sideline, it has been the choice of such strong grandmasters as England's no.1 Mickey Adams, the top Spaniard Alexei Shirov, the leading German Arkadij Naiditsch and that 3 ♗b5 expert, the Israeli Emil Sutovsky.

Repertoire Outline

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 e6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6

The other recapture ...dxc6?! doesn't really make much sense, as we'll see in Game 51.

5 b3



5...♘e7

The main line and the critical continuation, but Black has also tried:

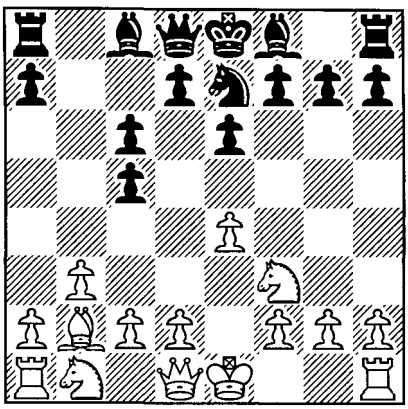
a) The sidelines 5...e5, 5...♕c7, 5...♕f6, 5...♗e7, and 5...♘f6 are all featured in Game 50. The first of these, although rare, is the most important of these sidelines as concrete steps have to be taken to prevent Black obtaining his ideal pawn structure.

b) 5...d6 was Etienne Bacrot's choice and that of many other grandmasters, but 6 e5! looks strong – see Game 49.

c) 5...d5 has been the choice of Hikaru Nakamura, Igor Nataf and Evgeny Sveshnikov, but is dubious strategically, as Game 48 will reveal.

d) 5...f6 this is the second of the two main lines and a flexible choice. Black can develop his knight either via h6 to f7 or to e7. We also have to be ready to react to a subsequent ...e6-e5. Strong players on the black side include Vladimir Kramnik, Dmitry Jakovenko and Teimour Radjabov – Game 47.

6 ♗b2



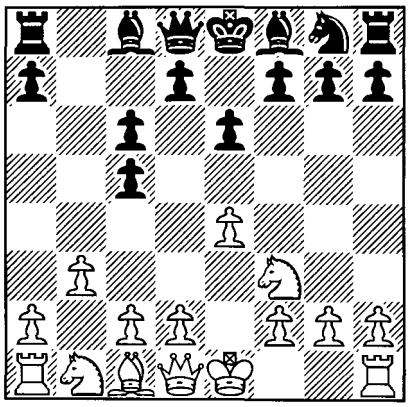
Now:

a) 6...f6 should be met by Alexei Shirov's 7 ♘h4! – see the notes to Game 46.

b) The unusual position after 6...♘g6 7 h4 h5 8 e5 is the main line of the 5 b3 variation. Although Black has done fairly well in some high-rated encounters, it has not been due to the opening stages, which have resulted in several clear advantages for White.

Game 46
E.Janev-S.Matsenko
Olomouc 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 e6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 b3!?



This is a slightly offbeat line, but nonetheless it has been employed by Adams, Shirov and Sutovsky amongst others. White exploits the fact that Black has yet to take the long diagonal.

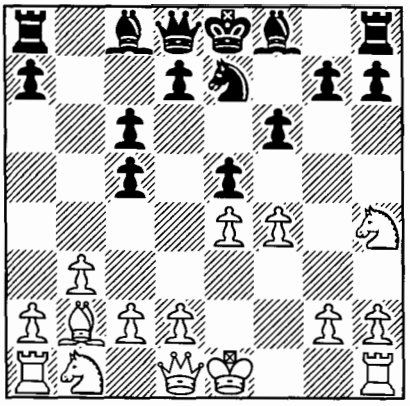
5 d3 ♘e7 6 ♕e2 is the main line, but I've struggled to find a cure to Radjabov's 6...d5. This is rather committal and weakens the c5-pawn, but Black seems to get good play and I didn't want to advocate a line in which we have to defend.

5...♘e7

This is Black's most common response. The knight develops to g6.

6 ♗b2 ♘g6

6...f6 can be met by Shirov's 7 ♘h4! e5 8 f4!, aggressive play by the second Latvian wizard.



After 8...d6 9 fxe5 fxe5 10 0-0 ♗e6 11 c3!? (11 ♘a3 g6 12 ♘c4 ♗g7 13 ♕e2 is a safer route to a promising position) 11...c4 (11...♘g6! 12 ♘f5 ♘f4 should have been played, activating the black knight and creating some threats of his own) 12 d4 cxd3 13 ♕xd3 ♘g6 14 ♘xg6 hxg6 15 ♘d2 ♗e7 16 ♘c4 d5 17 ♕g3! dxc4 18 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 19 ♖ad1+ Black was losing material in A.Shirov-J.Valmana Canto, San Sebastian 2006.

7 h4

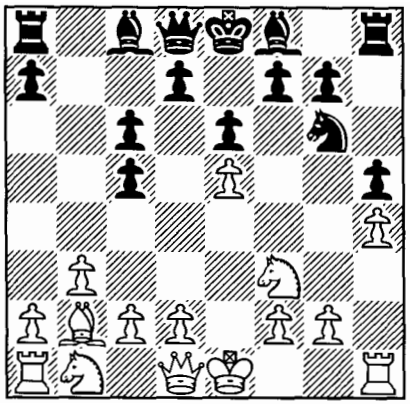
This looks very aggressive, but the idea is more positionally based. h4-h5 is a big threat and thus Black is forced to respond...

7...h5

...when he has a rather vulnerable kingside.

8 e5

This gains the g5-square for the white knight while fixing Black's pawns. He has two pawn breaks, but moving the d-pawn will leave him with doubled isolated c-pawns which will be a big weakness, while moving the f-pawn leaves Black's king rather vulnerable. As the position stands Black doesn't have many open lines for his bishops, so he will be obliged to make a concession for counterplay. This is probably the critical position of the 5 b3 variation and Black has tried almost every logical move here.



8...♖b8

This move had been tried by Matsenko before, but cannot really put White under any pressure. Alternatives are:

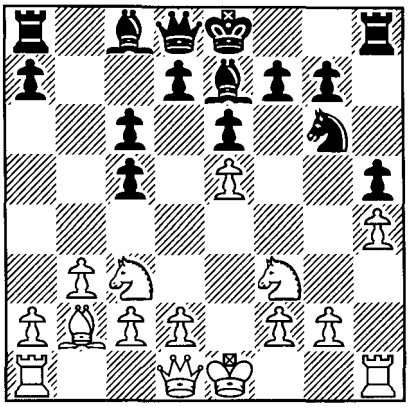
a) 8...d6 was tried in Adams-Shirov, Reykjavik 2003. This is a big structural concession. Black hopes to obtain enough play to make it worthwhile, but it looks like a big gamble which shouldn't have paid off. 9 exd6 ♕xd6 was the game when I think we should follow Oratovsky's suggestion of 10 ♘a3! (10 ♕e2 was played by the top English GM and he reached a winning position before things went very wrong) 10...f6 (10...♘f4 11 ♗e5 picks up the knight) 11 ♘c4 ♕d5 12 d3 e5 13 ♘e3 ♕f7 14 ♘d2 followed by ♕d1-f3 when White has full control of the position as well as a big structural advantage. Our king can go queenside to stay safe.

b) 8...c4?! was an innovative attempt by Grischuk, but is objectively dubious. Black gives up one of his c-pawns to improve his structure and open up the long diagonal for his uncontested bishop. Here 9 bxc4 ♖b8 10 ♗c3 c5 11 d3 ♗e7 12 ♘bd2 f5 13 g3 ♗b7 14 ♕e2 ♕b6 15 ♖g1!? ♕c6 16 a4 ♗a8 17 ♘h2 ♖h6 18 f4 left Black without a way

in and thus his compensation had dried up in L.McShane-A.Grischuk, Istanbul 2003. Luke steadily improved his position to a winning one, but Grischuk is tricky and another of my English team-mates had a disaster.

c) 8...f6 is another logical attempt at undermining White's centre, but leaves the kingside rather vulnerable. 9 ♕e2 ♗e7 10 ♘c3 ♕c7 11 ♘a4 ♔f7 12 0-0-0 fxe5 13 ♘g5+! ♔e8 14 ♕f3 ♗xg5 15 hxg5 d6 16 ♕e4 ♘f8 17 ♖h3 ♖b8 18 ♖dh1 c4 19 ♕xc4 c5 20 ♕e2 ♗b7 21 ♖xh5 was apparently somewhat strangely agreed drawn here in J.Van der Wiel-M.Lujan, Sao Paulo 2008. However, White's a pawn up and Black's king still vulnerable.

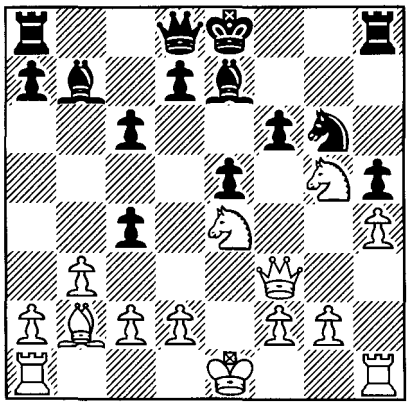
d) 8...♗e7 would be a 'normal' move that doesn't make any concession, but then again it isn't very threatening either. White should develop, 9 ♘c3 and then:



d1) 9...c4!? 10 ♘e4 reveals a further advantage of b3 over d3. Taking on b3 doesn't really rid Black of his positional problems on the queenside, even though it does get rid of the doubled pawn. This is due to the fact that the a-file is opened up towards the isolated a-pawn on a7. Now:

d11) 10...c5?! 11 ♘fg5! (the crowning achievement of White's sixth and seventh moves; Black now really struggles to get rid of the pesky knights) 11...♕c7 was F.Grafl-S.Kalinitschew, German League 2005, when 12 ♕f3! (with the double threat of ♘d6+ and ♕xf7+) 12...♘xe5 13 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 14 ♕xf7+ ♔d8 15 0-0 sees White hold all the aces.

d12) 10...♗b7 11 ♘fg5 was somewhat oddly given a question mark by Finkel, but it puts a lot of pressure on Black's position. After 11...f6 12 exf6 gxf6, 13 ♕f3! is the move he overlooked. Black is forced to play 13...e5 to defend his f6-pawn, but this leaves large holes on the light squares.



Indeed, after 14 ♕f5 ♖h6 15 ♘h7!, with the idea of 15...♘f4 16 ♘hxf6+! ♖xf6 (16...♗xf6 17 ♘d6+) 17 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 18 g3 ♘e6 19 0-0, White has an overwhelming position.

d2) 9...f6 was suggested as an improvement by Finkel, leading after 10 ♘e4 to:

d21) 10...d5 11 exd6 ♗xd6 12 d4!? (again not allowing Black time to play ...e6-e5, clamping down on the d4-square) 12...cxd4 13 ♘xd4 and White's pressure on c6, coupled with Black's problems with his king offers him a pleasant edge.

d22) 10...fxe5 11 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 12 ♗xe5 0-0 is given as unclear by Finkel. The h5-pawn isn't edible because of the rook fork,

but 13 ♕e2 d6 14 ♗g3 ♖f5 15 f4! (not allowing Black his ideal c5-c6-d6-e5 formation) 15...a5 16 a4 ♗f6 17 0-0-0 d5 18 d3! is a very unusual set-up where White's control of the g5-square and pressure on c5 keeps him as slight favourite.

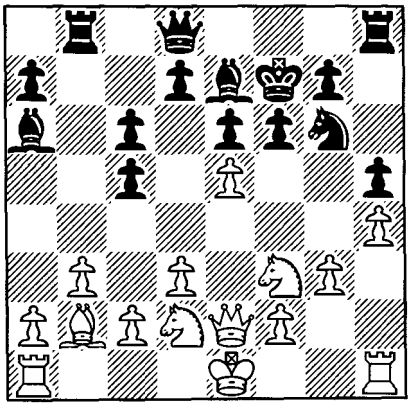
d23) 10...♗b7 11 d3 ♘xe5 (S.Pina Vega-S.Zepeda, Havana 2010) 12 ♗xe5! fxe5 13 ♘xe5 and White's knights dominate the board.

9 d3 ♗e7 10 ♘bd2 ♗a6 11 g3

This was presumably Janev's prepared improvement. This takes away the f4-square from the black knight and prepares ♕e2 without any hassle. Matsenko's previous game saw the natural 11 ♘e4, but this allowed 11...c4 12 dxc4 ♗xc4, illustrating the idea behind placing Black's rook on b8, V.Gorlanov-S.Matsenko, Anapa 2009.

Having said that, 11 ♕e2 looks sensible immediately, as 11...♘f4 12 ♕e4 and the knight will be trapped if it becomes too greedy.

11...f6 12 ♕e2 ♔f7



This is quite a usual theme. The f6-pawn prevents us from utilizing the g5-square. Obviously the rook is obliged to stay on h8 to protect the h5-pawn so f7 becomes the safest location for the monarch.

13 0-0

We have reached a problematic position for Black. The break ...c5-c4 has been well and truly prevented, while exchanging in the centre gives up the g5-square and leaves the king too vulnerable. Therefore the only remaining active plan is ...d6 or ...d5, but White would exchange immediately and leave Black with severe structural problems. Matsenko resorts to sitting and waiting, but as we see, this has its drawbacks too.

13 0-0-0 is also possible.

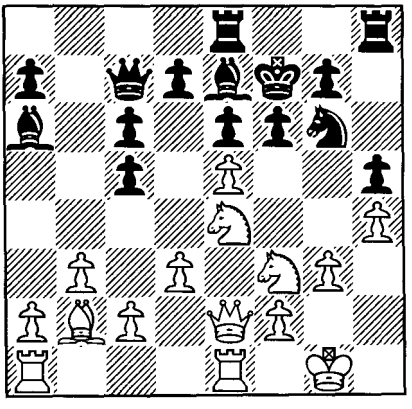
13...♕c7 14 ♖fe1

I would go for the immediate 14 ♘e4, preventing the next note.

14...♖be8

14...f5! needed to be tried, preventing the knight from jumping into e4, although this gives up the g5-square for good. We shouldn't really worry about ...f5-f4 as then both our knights would have access to g5 and, anyway, it's black's king on the f-file after all!

15 ♘e4!



15...♗c8

15...fxe5 would prevent White's 16th move possibility, but 16 ♗xe5! ♘xe5 17 ♘xe5+ ♔g8 18 ♘g6 ♖h7 19 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 20 ♘xc5 is hardly pleasant. Thus it seems 15...f5 was forced, but 16 ♘fg5+ ♔f8 17

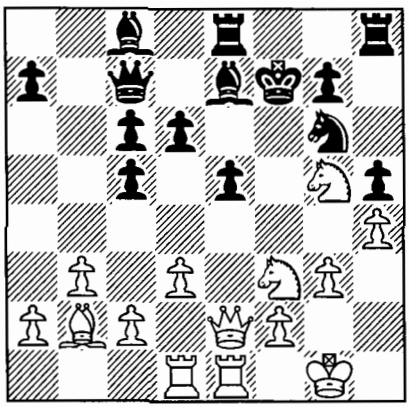
♘d6! ♗xd6 18 exd6 ♕xd6 19 ♗a3 ♔g8 20 ♕e3 ♕d4 21 ♗xc5 ♕xe3 22 fxe3 ♖a8 23 e4 leaves Black practically lost. Both rooks are out of the game and the bishop on a6 is useless.

White has built up a massive position, but here he fails to land the killer punch.

16 ♖ad1?

Janev misses his chance. Here 16 exf6! gxf6 17 ♘fg5+! would have been a fitting end to his accurate opening play: 17...fxg5 18 ♕f3+ ♘f4 (18...♔g8 19 ♘f6+ wins everything) 19 ♘xg5+ ♗xg5 20 hxg5 would leave White a pawn up and with a massive attack; Black's position is simply resignable.

16...fxe5 17 ♗xe5 d6 18 ♗b2 e5 19 ♘eg5+



White still has a pleasant advantage as Black's king is exposed and his rook on h8 is terminally out of the game, but Black can wriggle.

19...♔g8 20 b4?!

Janev misses another chance to put Matsenko away. 20 ♕e4! was very strong:

a) 20...♖f8?! is a cunning idea, but White can sacrifice his queen with 21 ♕xg6 ♗f5 22 ♘xe5! ♗xg6 (22...dxe5 23 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 24 ♖xe5 ♗xg6 25 ♖xe7 is also totally lost) 23 ♘xg6 ♗xg5 24 hxg5 when the threat of 25 ♖e7 is decisive.

b) 20...♘f8 21 ♕c4+ d5 22 ♗xe5! ♕xe5 23 ♘xe5 dxc4 24 ♘xc6 ♘g6 25 dxc4 leaves White with three pawns and a huge initiative for the piece. Black will regret not being able to activate his h8-rook.

c) 20...♖h6 21 ♘xe5! dxe5 (21...♘xe5 22 ♗xe5 dxe5 23 ♕c4+ ♔h8 24 ♘f7+ ♔h7 25 ♖xe5 and White's attack is decisive) 22 ♕c4+ ♔h8 23 ♘f7+ ♔h7 24 ♗xe5! ♕d7 (24...♘xe5 25 ♖xe5 transposes to the previous variation) 25 ♘xh6 ♖f8! 26 d4! and White is material up.

20...♗f6?!

20...cxb4 21 d4 was the idea, although Black is only a little worse after 21...d5 22 dxe5 ♗g4 23 ♕d3 ♖h6.

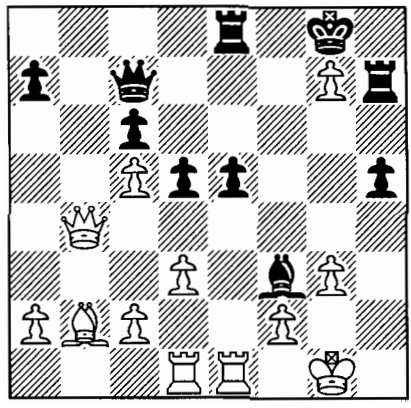
21 ♕e4 ♘f8 22 ♕c4+ ♘e6 23 bxc5 d5 24 ♕b4

Janev has missed a couple of chances, but has still managed to pick up a pawn and has strong pressure on Black's centre. Obviously the opening was a huge success!

24...♘xg5 25 hxg5 ♗g4!

Black has to try and complicate the issue.

26 gxf6 ♗xf3 27 fxg7 ♖h7



28 ♖b1

28 ♖xe5! ♖xe5 29 ♕f4 would have forced Black to defend against the mate threat with 29...♕c8, but after 30 ♕xf3 the exchange sacrifice has been extremely effi-

cient. The bishop on b2 has been opened up and defends the g7-pawn which has suddenly turned into a monster. Black will be obliged to sacrifice the exchange back on g7, but then he will simply be two pawns down.

28...h4 29 ♕f4!?

29 ♖xe5! was even stronger than on the previous move.

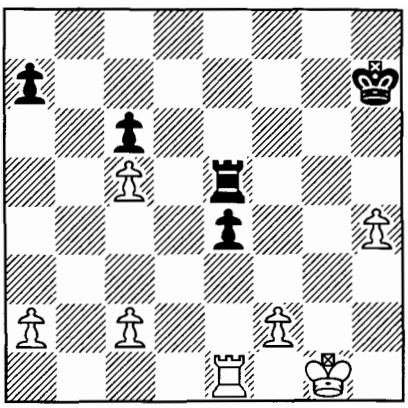
29...♗e4 30 ♗xe5?!

Leaving White in a much better endgame and killing all Black's counterplay, but this gives him some hope for a draw. 30 ♕f6! was much better. The e4-bishop is trapped and after 30...hxg3 31 dxe4 gxf2+ 32 ♔xf2 ♖xg7 33 ♔e2! Black has run out of counterplay for the piece.

30...♕xe5 31 ♕xe5 ♖xe5 32 dxe4?!

32 ♖b8+ ♔xg7 33 f4! was more accurate: 33...♖e7 (or 33...hxg3 34 ♖b7+ ♔g8 35 ♖xh7) 34 dxe4 hxg3 35 e5 and White's connected passed pawns should be enough for the full point.

32...dxe4 33 ♖b8+ ♔xg7 34 ♖b7+ ♔g6 35 ♖xh7 ♔xh7 36 gxh4

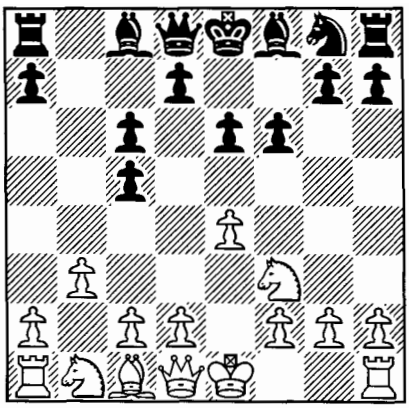


White is now only a little better and Matsenko does a good job to hold the half-point against a very disappointed Janev.

36...♔g6 37 ♔g2 ♔f5 38 ♖e3 ♖xc5 39 ♔g3 ♖xc2 40 f3 exf3 41 ♖xf3+ ♔g6 42 ♖a3 ♔f5 43 ♖xa7 ♖c3+ 44 ♔f2 c5 45 ♔e2 ♖h3 46 ♖a4 ♖h2+ 47 ♔f3 ♖h3+ 48 ♔f2 ♖c3 49 ♔e2 ♖h3 50 ♔e1 ♖h2 51 ♔d1 ♖h1+ 52 ♔e2 ♖h2+ 53 ♔f3 ♖h3+ 54 ♔g2 ♖c3 55 a3 ♖c2+ 56 ♔f3 ♖c3+ 57 ♔f2 ♖h3 58 ♔f1 ♖f3+ 59 ♔e1 ♖h3 60 ♔f2 ♖c3 ½-½

Game 47
V.Akopian-P.Eljanov
Moscow 2006

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 e6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 b3 f6

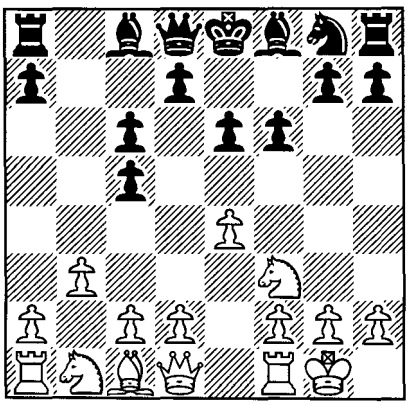


This is the other main method of combating our approach and the most logical. Black immediately blunts our bishop and prepares to play ...e6-e5 to set up a strong centre. However, he has to be careful not to do this too early or we will be able to play a quick c2-c3 and c2-d4 ourselves. Black can develop his knight to either h6 and then to f7, an idea we've seen before in the last couple of chapters, or else to e7, as in the last game.

6 0-0

6 d4!? is a very rare choice, but looks interesting. The idea is to prevent Black's ...♘g8-h6-f7 plan: 6...cxd4 7 ♕xd4 d5 (or 7...♕b6 8 ♕d3 ♗c5 9 0-0 ♘e7, as in

J.Mullon-A.Delorme, Nantes 2003, when 10 c4 looks more comfortable for White) 8 0-0 e5 9 ♕d3 ♗e6 10 ♘c3 d4 11 ♘a4 ♖c8 12 ♕a6 ♕d7 13 c3 c5 14 ♗a3 ♗e7 15 ♖ac1 was Cao Sang-P.Horvath, Balatonlelle 2002, when Black's centre looks commanding, but White can undermine it quite effectively and Black still needs a few moves to complete his development.



6...♘h6

Alternatively:

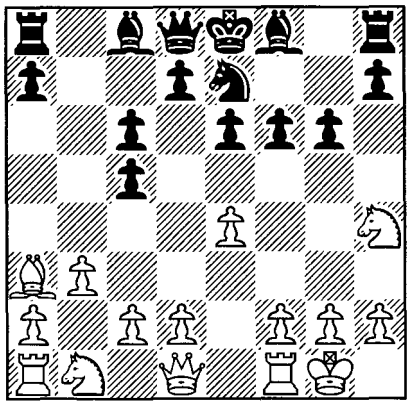
a) 6...e5 was tried by Jakovenko, albeit admittedly only in a blitz game: 7 c3 d5 8 ♕e2 dxe4 9 ♕xe4 ♕d5 was A.Naiditsch-D.Jakovenko, Moscow (blitz) 2009. Here I advocate 10 ♕a4 ♘e7 11 ♖e1, leaving both c3-c4, fixing the c5-pawn and d2-d4, opening up the black king, as possibilities: for example, 11...g5!? 12 d4! g4 13 dxe5! gxf3 14 exf6 ♗e6 15 fxe7 ♗xe7 16 g3 leaving White a pawn up.

b) 6...♘e7!? is the second most-common idea, with similar intentions to the previous game:

b1) 7 ♘h4 has been tried a couple of times by Adams and is similar to Shirov's play in the notes to the last game. After 7...g6 White has:

b11) After 8 ♗b2 I can't find a way to an advantage and 8...♗g7 9 f4 0-0 10 d3 g5! 11 fxg5 fxg5 12 ♗xg7 ♖xf1+ 13 ♕xf1 ♔xg7 14 ♘f3 ♘g6 was pretty level in M.Adams-Zhang Pengxiang, Merida 2008.

b12) 8 ♗a3!? has never been tried but looks like a way to breathe life into 7 ♘h4.



After 8...d6 9 d4! Black can't capture the pawn, so is forced into the sacrifice 9...♗g7 (9...cxd4 10 ♕xd4 ♘g8 11 ♖d1 is great for White) 10 dxc5 d5, but I believe White has good chances after 11 exd5 f5 12 ♘d2 ♘xd5 13 ♘hf3. Grabbing the exchange is going to cripple Black on the dark squares so I think White has a good position here. Certainly one for future testing.

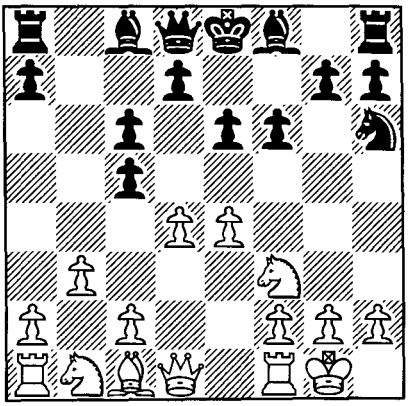
b2) 7 ♗a3 and now:

b21) 7...♘g6 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 (9...♘xf8 10 ♕xd4 ♘g6 11 c4 is similar, E.Kovalevskaya-T.Shumiakina, Kstovo 1998) resembles the main line, the only difference being the knight on g6 rather than f7. This means that 10 ♘xd4 threatens 11 ♘xe6+ and thus Black cannot hit the knight away immediately. Indeed, 10...♕c7 11 c4 allows White to obtain the bind that we desire in this structure, C.Peptan-V.Cmilyte, Plovdiv 2008.

b22) 7...d6 is an alternative option for Black. With 8 c3 ♘g6 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 White has managed to set up a strong centre and can proceed to put pressure on

Black's pawns. The position is complex, but I think we have good chances for an edge: for example, 10...♗a6 (10...♗e7 has been tried a few times, but 11 ♕c1 ♗b7 12 ♕e3 0-0 13 ♘bd2 looks like a reasonable mode of development, with ideas of breaking with e4-e5; if Black forestalls this then we will have plenty of pressure on the d6-pawn) 11 ♖e1 ♗e7, as in V.Yandemirov-P.Smirnov, Moscow 2009, when White chose the wrong break, but should have played 12 d5!, forcing a concession from Black, i.e. 12...cxd5 13 ♘d4! ♕d7 14 exd5 e5 (14...exd5 15 ♘c3 0-0 16 ♘xd5 gives White a fantastic position) 15 ♘e6 ♔f7 16 ♘c3 ♘f8 17 ♖c1!? with promising chances.

7 d4



This must be critical. White threatens to capture on h6 which would decimate Black's structure and leave his king too weak. Therefore Black must move his knight and allow White a further tempo.

7...♘f7

7...cxd4 has been tried, but strikes me as extremely risky after 8 ♗xh6 gxh6:

a) 9 ♘xd4 ♕a5 (9...♕e7 10 ♖e1 ♕f7 11 c4 ♗e7 12 ♖e3 a6 13 ♘c3 c5 14 ♘de2 left White with a very comfortable position in E.Tsuboi-D.D'Israel, Sao Paulo 2004) 10 ♘d2 ♗a6 11 ♘c4!? ♕c5 12 e5!? (12 ♕d3 ♖g8 13 ♖ad1 ♖g7 14 g3 was a solid choice) 12...♗xc4 13 bxc4 ♕xe5 14 ♖e1 ♕c5 15 ♖b1 ♗e7 was J.Boudre-Y.Berthelot, Clichy 1993, when 16 ♕d3! should have been played, to meet 16...0-0-0 with 17 ♕b3. Black can survive with 17...♕b4!, but 18 ♘xc6! dxc6 19 ♕xb4 ♗xb4 20 ♖xb4 leaves White better in the endgame thanks to the open files for his rooks.

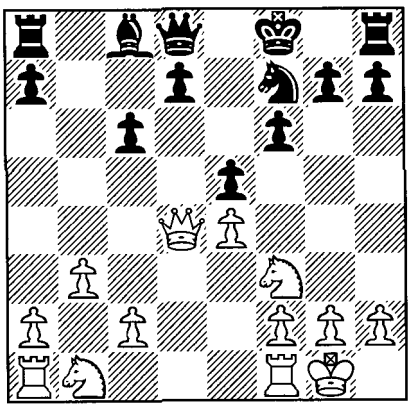
b) 9 ♕xd4 ♖g8 10 ♘bd2 looks like the most straightforward antidote when White intends to play ♘d2-c4-d6 and 10...♗a6 11 ♘c4! d5 12 exd5 cxd5 13 ♖fe1! is too dangerous for Black.

8 ♗a3 cxd4 9 ♗xf8 ♔xf8

It looks wise to bring the king over to the kingside where it's a bit safer. Otherwise, 9...♖xf8 10 ♕xd4 ♕b6 11 ♕d2 c5 12 ♖d1 ♔e7 13 e5!? (attempting to exploit Black's king position immediately; 13 ♕d3 d6 14 ♘fd2 ♗a6 15 ♕h3 would also have been enough for an edge) 13...♕c7 (13...♘xe5 fails to equalize after 14 ♘xe5 fxe5 15 ♕g5+ ♔f7 16 ♕xe5 d5 17 c4 d4 18 ♘d2 ♗b7 19 b4! when White can play against Black's c5- and d4-pawns) 14 exf6+ gxf6 15 ♘c3 ♗b7 16 ♕e3 ♘e5 17 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 18 ♕d3 ♗c6 19 ♖e1 ♕h5 20 ♘e4 ♖g8 was seen in F.Bellini-V.Tomescu, Reggio Emilia 2003, when White could have continued his campaign against Black's vulnerable king with 21 ♘g3! ♕g6 22 ♕c4 h5!? (22...♕g5 23 ♖ad1 ♔f7 24 ♖d6 leaves Black in a bind; he also needs a good defence against 25 ♖xc6!) 23 ♕xc5+ ♔f7 24 ♖xe6! dxe6 25 ♕xc6 ♖ae8 26 ♖d1 ♖e7 27 ♘f1!, rerouting the knight to e3 when White's king will be completely secure which is more than can be said of Black's.

10 ♕xd4 e5

Black's next two moves aren't forced, but otherwise White will get c2-c4 in with a complete bind.



Indeed, 10...d6 11 c4 c5 12 ♕e3 g6 13 ♘c3 ♔g7 14 ♖ad1 ♗b7 15 ♘e1 ♖e8 16 f4 is better for White as Black is stuck in passivity. The draw agreement here in A.Zatonskih-A.Moiseenko, Kapuskasing 2004, was presumably due to the 200 points separating White and Black, as White can play on without much risk.

11 ♕d2

It seems Black can equalize here with accurate play here so the alternatives should be examined.

a) 11 ♕d3 worked out well for Karjakin after 11...d5 12 ♖d1 f5?! 13 ♕c3! in S.Karjakin-G.Arzumanian, Alushta 2002. However, 12...♕e7! is a better equalizing try, although 13 ♘c3 f5 (13...d4 14 ♘a4 ♗g4 15 h3 ♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 is more pleasant for White, who can again undermine Black's centre with c2-c3 and b3-b4) 14 exd5 e4 15 ♕c4 exf3 16 ♖e1 ♕f6 17 dxc6 would leave White with a very dangerous-looking initiative.

b) 11 ♕c5+!? is an unplayed suggestion by Rowson and could be White's best try for an edge. His idea is 11...♕e7 12 ♕a5 d5!? (Rowson argues that otherwise White will bind Black with c2-c4, as we saw happening after 10...d6, above; 12...♕d8 might put a spanner in the works if Black is happy with a draw, although 13 ♕xd8+ ♘xd8 14 c4 ♔e7 15 ♖d1 is a little something for White, since Black has a problem activating his position while he always has to be careful about a potential c4-c5 after ...d7-d6) 13 exd5 cxd5 14 ♕xd5 ♗b7 15 ♕d1 ♖d8 16 ♕e2 when Black shouldn't have enough for the pawn.

11...d5

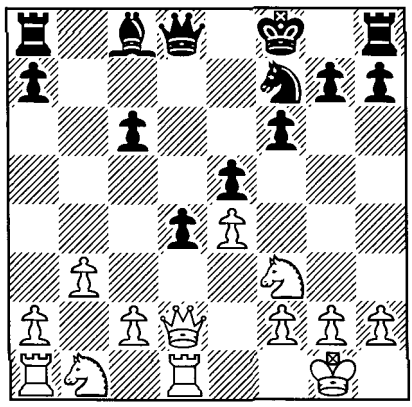
11...d6 was the choice of Sveshnikov, but this condemned Black to a rather passive position after 12 c4 g6 13 ♘c3 ♔g7 14 ♖ac1 ♗e6 15 ♘e1 ♕e7 16 ♘d3 g5 in L.Yudasin-E.Sveshnikov, St Petersburg 1997. Here White should have continued patiently building up the pressure with 17 ♕e3 and 18 ♖fd1.

12 ♖d1

Bearing in mind Black's next note, possibly White could have tried 12 h3!? dxe4 13 ♕b4+ ♘d6 14 ♖d1 ♔e7 15 ♘e1 which leaves Black in an awkward couple of pins.

12...d4

12...♗g4! looks interesting and might be Black's most accurate response: 13 exd5 ♗xf3 14 gxf3 ♘g5 15 ♕b4+ ♕e7 16 d6 (16 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 17 dxc6 ♘xf3+ 18 ♔g2 ♘d4 19 ♘c3 is more or less level, while 16 ♕c4!? ♕d7! gives Black a dangerous counterattack) 16...♕d7 17 ♘d2 is extremely unclear.



13 ♘e1

Akopian doesn't give Eljanov another chance to pin the knight. White could try undermining the centre immediately with 13 c3 c5 14 b4, but Black can play as in the previous note with 14...♗g4!. That said, 15 ♕d3 (15 bxc5 ♗xf3 16 gxf3 ♘g5 is very messy) 15...c4! (15...cxb4 16 cxd4 exd4 17 ♘bd2 ♘e5 18 ♕b3 leaves White with very good compensation) 16 ♕xc4 ♗xf3 17 gxf3 ♘g5 18 ♔h1 ♖c8 19 ♕e2 probably favours White, although Black has counterplay.

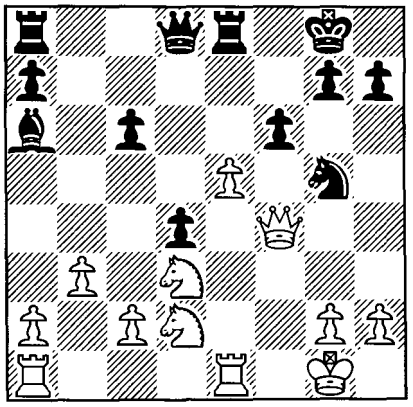
13...♘g5 14 f4!? exf4

14...♘xe4 15 ♕e2 ♗f5 would give White the chance to win a piece with 16 g4 (better is 16 fxe5 fxe5 17 ♘d3 ♔g8 18 ♘xe5 ♕d5 19 ♕c4 ♕xc4 20 ♘xc4 with a small plus) 16...♗g6 17 f5 ♘g5 18 fxg6 hxg6, but I think Black's compensation is too strong here.

15 ♕xf4

15 ♕xd4 ♕xd4+ 16 ♖xd4 must be at least somewhat better for White.

15...♔f7 16 ♘d2 ♖e8 17 ♘d3 ♔g8 18 ♖e1 ♗a6 19 e5!



After some manoeuvring White eventually breaks in the centre.

19...♗xd3 20 cxd3 ♕c7 21 ♕xd4 fxe5 22 ♕e3

The position now veers towards a draw. 22 ♕c4+! looked like the best way to retain some advantage: 22...♘f7 (22...♔h8 23 ♖ac1 ♕b6+ 24 ♕c5 is also better for White) 23 ♖f1 ♖ad8 24 ♖ac1 ♖d4 25 ♕xc6 ♕xc6 26 ♖xc6 ♖xd3 27 ♖c7! ♘d6 28 ♘c4 ♘xc4 29 bxc4 and White has the better endgame.

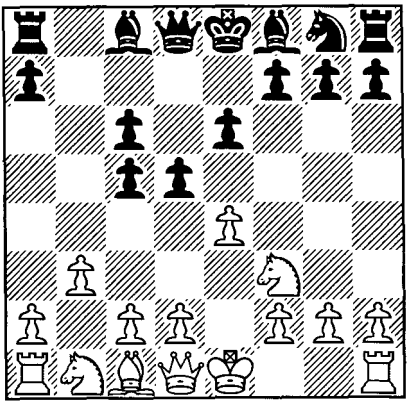
22...h6 23 ♖ac1 ♖ad8 24 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ 25 ♕xf3 ♕b6+ 26 ♔h1 ♕a6 ½-½

Game 48
A.Naiditsch-E.Sveshnikov
Liepaja (rapid) 2007

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 e6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 b3

In the chapter introduction I wrote that Radjabov has been doing quite well recently with 5 d3 ♘e7 6 ♕e2 d5. This is because he is able to drum up a quick initiative to exploit the placement of White's queen, with a quick ...♘e7-g6-f4, while ...c5-c4 is a positional threat with the idea of taking on d3. A recent game continued 7 b3 f6 8 e5 ♘g6 9 ♗b2 ♗e7 10 ♘bd2 a5 11 a4 0-0 12 0-0-0 f5 with a very complicated position. White still has his positional trumps, but it will come down to whose attack is faster, so that is rather irrelevant, A.Motylev-D.Jakovenko, Poikovsky 2010.

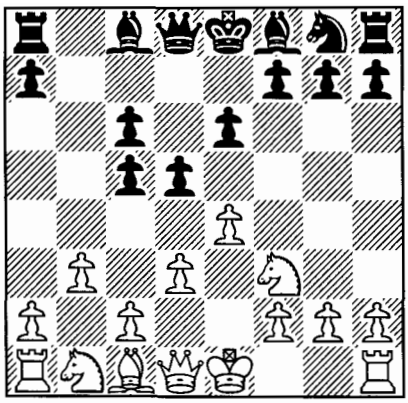
5...d5



A fairly common response but this is dubious strategically. Black leaves his c-pawns behind and will, indeed, be left with problems with his queenside pawns.

6 d3!?

I chose this game because I wanted to show that we shouldn't fear the queen exchange even if our king is temporarily misplaced. From the last note I hope you understood that Black is playing for the initiative with these early ...d7-d5 breaks, trying to offset his structural problems. Therefore we should be happy to exchange as much as possible.



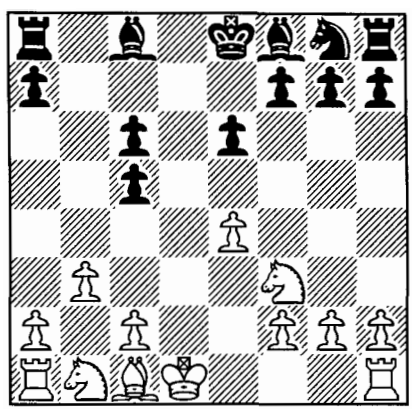
6...dxe4?!

The endgame is highly unpleasant for Black even if he achieves the exchange of c5 and b3, and therefore this move must be incorrect.

a) We should respond to 6...c4?! with 7 dxc4! as 7...dxc4 8 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9 ♘e5! also wins a pawn) 8 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 gives White the choice of 9 ♘e5 or 9 ♘g5, leaving us a pawn up.

b) 6...♘f6 7 ♕e2 ♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 when I'd go for 9 c4!, fixing the c5-pawn as an eternal weakness. If we compare this position to the Motylev-Jakovenko game seen above, it is clear that Black has much less dynamic potential and therefore we can continue our plan of slowly pressuring the c5-pawn: 9...♕c7 10 ♗g5 (or 10 ♗b2 d4 11 e5! – of course we don't want to allow Black to play ...e6-e5 himself – 11...♘d7 12 ♗c1! a5 13 ♗f4 a4 14 ♘bd2 ♘b6 15 ♘e4 and in H.Milligan-E.Yip, Wanganui 2007, the board one of the New Zealand women's team had taken control of the position; while Black is tied down to his queenside, we have ideas of pushing our h-pawn to create problems on the kingside too, just like in the King's Indian Attack) 10...♘h5?! (the trade of bishops only helps White as c5 becomes yet more vulnerable and Black's chances for counterplay decrease) 11 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 12 e5 f5 13 ♘c3 ♗d7 14 ♘a4 ♗e8 15 ♕e3 d4 16 ♕g5! and in M.Palac-T.Meynard, Asnieres sur Seine 2006, White was winning both the c5- and d4-pawns. By the way the result is given as a draw, but White is completely winning in the final position so it's probably an input error.

7 dxe4 ♕xd1+ 8 ♔xd1



This is an important position for our treatment of 5...d5. Black has exchanged queens and misplaced our king, but the most important aspect of the position is Black's mangled queenside pawns. Sveshnikov now tried to eradicate them with:

8...c4

The previous time this position was reached, Black inserted 8...♘f6 9 ♘bd2, but it didn't make much different to the overall assessment: 9...c4 10 ♗b2 ♗c5 11 ♔e2 cxb3 12 axb3 0-0 was A.Pridorozhni-M.Ginzburg, Yerevan 2000, when White should have continued with 13 ♘e5 à la Naiditsch, with a great position.

I'll add a line to illustrate our plans if Black doesn't push ...c5-c4 himself: 8...♗e7 9 e5 ♗a6 10 c4! (fixing Black's weaknesses) 10...♘f6!? 11 ♔c2 ♘d7 12 ♘c3 and it's clear White has all the trumps in the position; we can continue pressing with ♖h1-d1, ♗c1-e3 and ♘c3-e4, while Black's light-squared bishop has no future at all in this structure.

9 ♘e5!

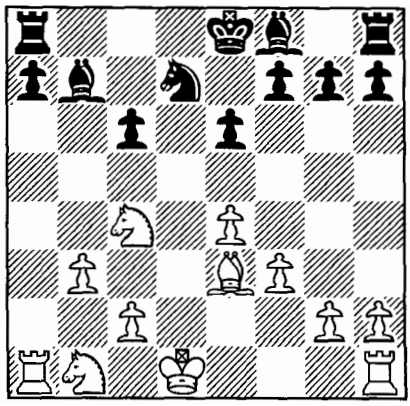
Of course we shouldn't take the pawn. That would leave us a pawn up, but it's not much of a pawn and we would no longer have our strategic advantage. Instead we should provoke Black to play ...cxb3, opening the a-file for our rook. As we will see, Black's remaining couple of queenside pawns are still big weaknesses.

9...♘f6 10 f3 cxb3

This leaves Black in a truly horrible position. 10...♗a6 had to be tried, although Black's position is still far from pleasant. Indeed, White could grab the c6-pawn when Black obtains temporary compensation, but following 11 ♘xc6 ♗b5 12 ♘e5 ♖d8+ 13 ♔e1 ♖c8 14 ♘a3 ♗b4+ 15 ♔d1! ♗c3 (15...♖d8+ 16 ♔e2 ♗xa3 17 ♗xa3 cxb3+ 18 c4! leaves White winning) 16 ♘xb5 ♗xe5 (Black can't win material with 16...♖d8+ 17 ♔e2 ♗xa1, as 18 ♘c7+ ♔f8 19 ♗a3+ wins the bishop in the corner) 17 ♖b1 0-0 18 ♘a3! that has dried up, leaving White a clear pawn up.

11 axb3 ♗b7 12 ♗e3 ♘d7 13 ♘c4

The problems with Black's position are becoming apparent. The a7-pawn isn't easy to defend and White has an easy job building up pressure on the a-file. Meanwhile the bishop on b7 continues to struggle to find a useful post.



13...c5

Defending the a7-pawn and opening up a few more squares for the light-squared bishop, but now c5 is in the firing line and the f8-bishop won't appreciate being hemmed in.

14 ♔e2 f5!?

In a prospectless position Sveshnikov desperately tries for counterplay, but it's rather futile.

15 ♘c3 fxe4 16 ♘xe4 ♗d5 17 ♖a5!

Black is unable to defend both the c5- and a7-pawns.

17...♘b6

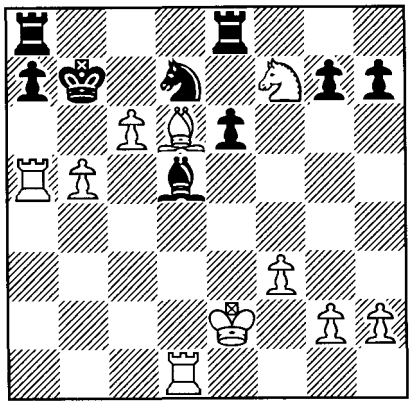
The alternative 17...♗xc4+ 18 bxc4 ♘e5 19 ♖ha1! ♘xc4 20 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 21 ♖xa7 ♘xe3 22 ♔xe3 would have left Black in a completely hopeless endgame as he has no way to challenge the white king entering via f4-f5 or c3-c4.

18 ♘cd6+ ♗xd6 19 ♘xd6+ ♔d7 20 ♗xc5 ♖hb8 21 c4!

Naiditsch has picked up the pawn and has continuing pressure on the queenside. What's worse for Sveshnikov is that his king

is wide open.

21...♗c6 22 ♖d1 ♔c7 23 ♘f7! ♘d7 24 ♗d6+ ♔b6 25 b4 ♖e8 26 c5+ ♔b7 27 b5 ♗d5 28 c6+



White picks up the bishop. One would expect Black to resign here, but it was a rapid game so Sveshnikov continues, hoping for a miracle.

28...♔b6 29 cxd7 ♔xa5 30 dxe8♕ ♖xe8 31 ♗c7+

31 ♗c5! with the threat of 32 ♖a1+ and 33 ♘d6+, picking up the rook, would have ended matters immediately, as 31...♗c4+ 32 ♔d2 ♗xb5 33 ♖a1+ ♗a4 34 ♘d6 ♖b8 35 ♗d4! followed by 36 ♗c3+ wins the a4-bishop as well.

31...♔b4 32 ♖b1+ ♔c5 33 ♗d6+ ♔b6 34 ♗e5 ♖c8 35 ♗d4+ ♔a5 36 ♘e5

A sign White was in bad time trouble and starting to panic. The simple 36 ♖a1+ ♔b4 37 ♖xa7 was easiest.

36...♖c2+ 37 ♔e3 ♖xg2 38 ♘c6+ ♔a4 39 ♖b4+ ♔a3 40 ♗c5 ♔a2 41 ♘e7 ♖c2 42 ♘xd5 ♖xc5 43 ♘f4 ♔a3 44 ♖b1 ♔a2 45 ♘d3 ♖h5 46 ♖b2+ ♔a3 47 ♖c2 ♖xb5 48 ♖c3+ 1-0

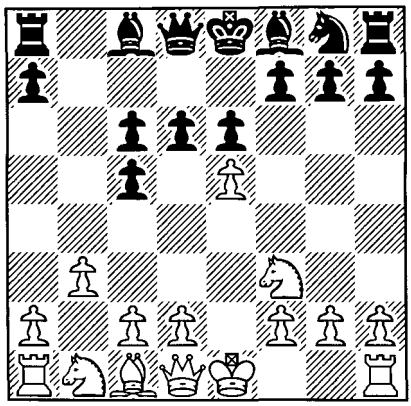
I presume Black lost on time at this point as while White is still completely winning, it's the best position Black's had for 20 moves!

Game 49
Zhao Jun-Zhang Pengxiang
Moscow 2004

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 e6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 b3 d6

Black's idea is to play ...e6-e5 and, although he's losing a tempo with his e-pawn, he argues that b2-b3 would be out of place in that structure.

6 e5!



This move was endorsed by Richard Palliser in his ♗b5 Sicilian book and is the best way to cut across Black's plans.

6...dxe5

6...d5 has also been tried, but again White can put pressure on Black's queenside: 7 0-0 ♗e7 8 d3 f5 9 c4 d4 10 ♘g5 and White had a better structure coupled with play against Black's king in G.Sax-W.Pils, Graz 1984.

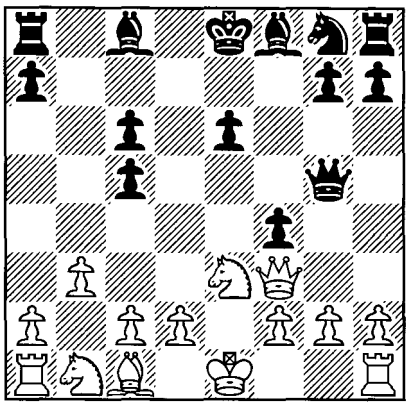
7 ♘xe5 ♕d4

Black smells no fear and goes for the rook. Alternatively:

a) 7...♕d5 8 ♘f3 ♕e4+ 9 ♔f1 and Black's structural problems are more important than White's temporarily misplaced king. F.Caruana-R.Vazquez Igarza, Madrid 2006, continued 9...♘f6 10 d3 ♗a6 11 ♕e2 ♕d5

12 ♘c3 ♕d8 13 ♘e4 ♗e7 14 ♗b2 and White had taken control of the position.

b) 7...♕g5 is the other attempt to win material, but after 8 ♘g4 f5 9 ♘e3 f4, 10 ♕f3! is a very strong piece sacrifice:



b1) 10...fxe3?! 11 ♕xc6+ ♔d8 12 ♕xa8 exd2+ was B.Martinez-J.Morella, Villa Clara 2001, when Nogueiras suggests 13 ♘xd2 ♕e5+ 14 ♘e4 ♕xa1 15 0-0 and White's attack is simply too strong, which is hardly a surprise as Black's pieces are still on their starting squares, except the black queen in the corner: for instance, 15...♕d4 16 ♘g5 ♕d7 17 ♘f7+! ♕xf7 18 ♖d1+ ♔c7 19 ♕xa7+ ♗b7 20 ♗d2! ♗e7 21 ♗a5+ ♔c8 22 ♕b6, mating.

b2) 10...♕e5 should be tried, but Black's position is very rocky. Perhaps a computer can defend but Black has big practical problems, as shown by both:

b21) 11 d4!? cxd4 12 ♕xc6+ ♔f7 13 ♕xa8 dxe3 14 ♕xc8 ♕xa1 15 0-0 ♘f6 16 ♘c3 exf2+ 17 ♔h1 is extremely complex, but I would prefer White who has the more active queen.

b22) 11 ♕xc6+ ♔d8 12 0-0! fxe3 13 ♕xa8 ♗d6 (13...e2 14 ♖e1 ♗d6 15 g3 ♕xa1 16 ♘c3 forces Black to play in effect a queen down for the foreseeable future) 14 f4 ♕xa1 15 dxe3 ♕xb1 16 ♕c6 ♕xc2 17 ♕xd6+ ♔e8 18 ♗a3 gives White a dangerous initiative for the piece.

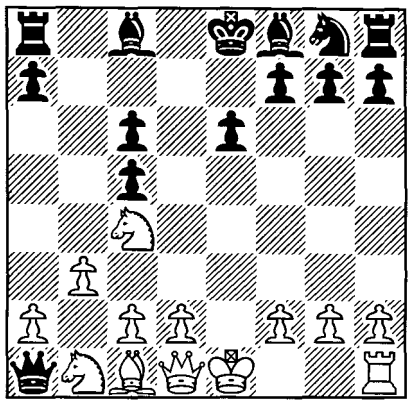
8 ♘c4

8 ♗b2!? is an intriguing, unplayed alternative. Then:

a) 8...♕xb2? 9 ♘c3 threatens to trap the black queen with 10 ♘c4, so Black has to play 9...♕a3 (9...♗a6 10 ♖b1 ♕a3 11 ♕f3 is similar), but 10 ♕f3! is extremely dangerous. Black is forced to try 10...♘e7, but after 11 ♕xf7+ ♔d8 12 0-0 White has extremely dangerous pressure for the piece.

b) Therefore 8...♕e4+ should be tried when 9 ♔f1 is very similar to the positions examined in note 'b' to Black's 7th move, above.

8...♕xa1



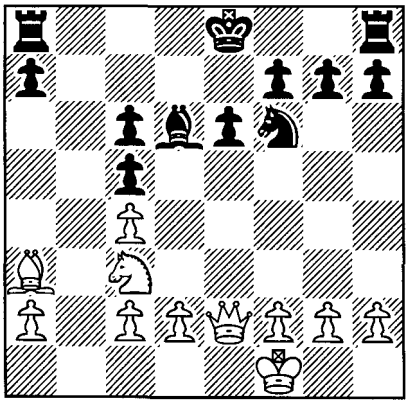
Taking the rook is the critical test, although the black queen is now stranded and therefore White is clearly better. In a couple of games Black has decided that discretion is the better part of valour with 8...♗a6, but 9 ♗b2 ♕e4+ 10 ♘e3 ♘f6 11 d3 ♕g6 12 ♘d2 ♗d6 13 ♕f3 ♘d5, as in R.Damaso-P.Llaneza Vega, Medina del Campo 2001, and then 14 ♘ec4 leaves White with a fantastic position.

9 ♘c3 ♗a6

9...♘f6 was tried in the only other game that reached this position, but the evalua-

tion isn't altered: 10 0-0 ♘d5 11 ♕f3 ♗e7 12 ♗a3 ♕xf1+ 13 ♔xf1 0-0 14 ♘e4 ♗a6 15 ♘xc5 ♗xc4+ 16 bxc4 left White clearly better. In fact Black didn't survive long here: 16...♘b6 17 ♕g4 g6 18 d3 ♖ab8 19 ♕d4 ♖fd8 20 ♕e5 ♗d6 21 ♕g5 ♗f8? 22 ♗b2! ♘xc4 (22...♗g7 23 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 24 ♕e7 ♔g8 25 ♕xa7 is also hopeless) 23 dxc4 ♗xc5 24 ♕f6?! and 1-0 in V.Cabarkapa-I.Zlatilov, Vrbas 1993, although 24 ♗f6! was a much more accurate finish as Black could have played on in the final position with 24...♖xb2.

10 0-0 ♗xc4 11 bxc4 ♗d6 12 ♕e2 ♘f6 13 ♗a3 ♕xf1+ 14 ♔xf1



So the queen has eventually been captured leaving a position, with two rooks against the queen. Generally two rooks would be slightly stronger, but here c5 is dropping by force and c6 is a rather weak pawn too. Moreover, the black rooks struggle to make any impact on the position.

14...0-0-0?!

Over-ambitious. White has enough pieces to make the queenside very unpleasant for the black king. 14...0-0 was more sensible, although 15 ♘e4 ♘xe4 16 ♕xe4 ♖ab8 (or 16...♖fc8 17 ♕e3 ♖ab8 18 ♔e2 and the c5-pawn drops) 17 ♕xc6 ♖fd8 18 g3 ♗f8 19 ♔e2 leaves White with a great ending: he will slowly be able to push his queenside pawns, with the idea of c2-c3 and d2-d4.

15 ♘a4 ♘d7 16 ♕g4

I don't believe the rest of the game is accurate unfortunately, but anyway it's clear that White has a clear advantage as he can win the c5-pawn whenever he wants. Here 16 ♕f3! ♘e5 17 ♕c3 was the right way to win the g-pawn, as 17...♘d7 is forced to defend the c5-pawn.

16...f6? 17 d3? ♖dg8? 18 ♕f3? ♖e8?? 19 ♕h5?? ♖eg8 20 ♕e2?! ♖e8 21 ♕e3

Perhaps the game is back on track now.

21...♖e7 22 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 23 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 24 ♕xc5 ♖c7 25 f4 ♖e8 26 ♔e2 ♔b7 27 ♔d2 e5 28 f5 ♖d7 29 ♔e3 ♖g8 30 g3 1-0

White is clearly better although the position is far from resignable.

Game 50
J.Ehlvest-A.Vaisser
Novosibirsk 1993

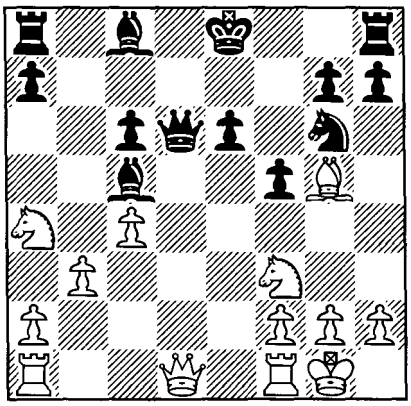
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 e6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 b3 ♕f6

A very creative approach, but one which is unlikely to be repeated. Here we'll take a quick overview of Black's other rare alternatives:

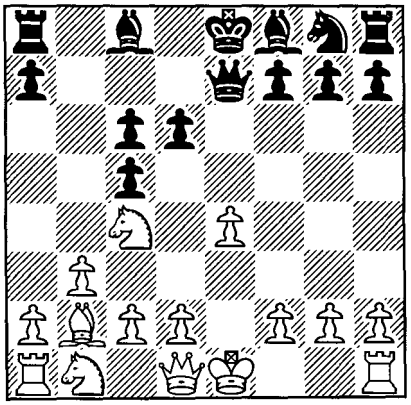
a) 5...♘f6 allows White to gain a lot of time against the black knight and the ideas are rather similar to Steingrimsson-Slingerland in Chapter Five: 6 e5 ♘d5 7 0-0 ♗e7 8 c4 ♘f4 9 d4 ♘g6 10 dxc5 ♗xc5 11 ♘c3 d5 (11...f5 is more positionally desirable, although 12 exf6 ♕xf6 13 ♘e4! ♕xa1 14 ♕e2! ♗e7 15 ♗g5 ♕xf1+ 16 ♔xf1 is very promising) 12 exd6 f5!? 13 ♗g5 ♕xd6 14 ♘a4. *(see following diagram)*

Here in E.Kovalevskaya-N.Eisenbeis, Baden 2003, White had achieved all that we

can hope for. Note that Black's light-squared bishop is still stuck in behind his own pawns.



b) 5...e5 has only been played a couple of times, but is critical according to Palliser. We don't want to allow Black his ideal set-up with ...d7-d6, so we're obliged to play 6 ♘xe5 ♕e7 7 ♗b2 d6 8 ♘c4 and then:



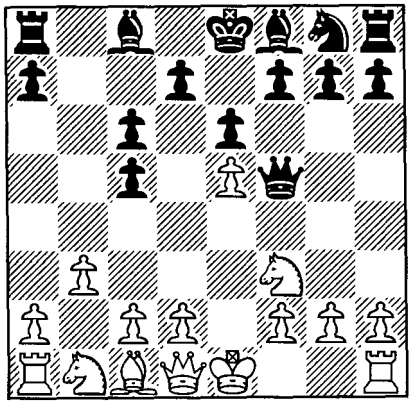
b1) 8...♕xe4+ 9 ♘e3 ♘f6 10 ♗xf6! gxf6 11 ♘c3 and White definitely had the better structure in E.Shaposhnikov-D.Bocharov, Kazan 2001.

b2) 8...d5 is suggested as an improvement by Shaposhnikov, who gives the line 9 ♘e5!? (9 ♘e3 d4 10 ♘c4 ♕xe4+ 11 ♕e2 ♕xe2+ 12 ♔xe2 must be somewhat better for White due to Black's crippled structure) 9...f6 10 ♘xc6 ♕xe4+ 11 ♔f1 a5, leaving the c6-knight trapped offside. Palliser, however, observes that White can drum up a quick attack with 12 ♘c3 ♕e6 13 ♕h5+ ♔d7 14 ♖e1 ♕xc6 15 ♘xd5. The position is extremely complicated, but I would prefer to be White as he is the one with the initiative. Black will have to play extremely accurately to convert his extra piece while his king dances round the centre. If you don't feel comfortable in such a position then 9 ♘e3 is a safe alternative. However, if you are interested, the computer says this position is roughly equal, proving that even the silicon monster isn't completely convinced by the extra piece.

c) 5...♗e7 may look rather flexible, but now the black knight has less possibilities. I think 6 0-0 is best when 6...♘f6 (6...f6 7 d4 leaves the g8-knight without any prospects) 7 e5 ♘d5 8 c4 would transpose to line 'a'.

d) Igor Nataf tried to stay very flexible with 5...♕c7, but it rather backfired after 6 0-0 ♗e7 7 ♖e1, leaving the black knight without a good development plan: 7...♘h6 8 d4! cxd4 9 ♕xd4 f6 10 ♗xh6 gxh6 11 c4 and Black had problems with his king and structure in A.Naiditsch-I.Nataf, French League 2009.

6 e5 ♕f5



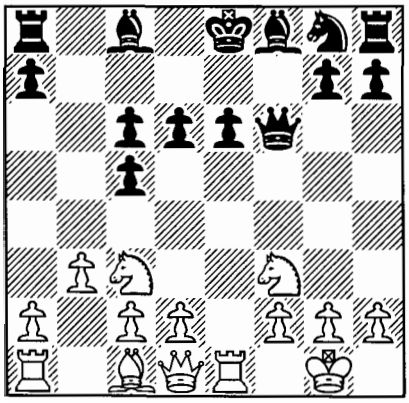
Vaisser hopes he can play on the light squares and that his queen will prove active, but this rather backfires. 6...♕g6 was played in the only other game to reach this position. After 7 0-0 Black tried for counterplay with 7...d5, but 8 exd6 ♗xd6 9 ♗b2 ♘f6 10 d3 0-0 11 ♘bd2 left him with nothing to show for his impaired structure in S.Reinso-D.Valencia, Internet (rapid) 2004.

7 0-0 f6

Undermining White's centre is logical as otherwise it's difficult to see what Black is to do.

7...g5!? is another aggressive plan and would make more sense of the queen sortie: 8 ♗b2 ♗g7 (8...g4 9 ♘h4 ♕h5 10 g3 ♗e7 11 ♘g2 doesn't get anywhere and leaves a trail of squares available to the white pieces) 9 ♖e1 ♘e7 (9...d5 10 d4!? g4 11 ♘h4 ♕h5 12 g3 cxd4 13 ♕xd4 ♘e7 14 ♗a3 leaves Black with problems on the a3-f8 diagonal, highlighted by 14...♘g6? 15 ♕c5!) 10 ♘c3 g4 11 ♘e4! ♔f8 12 ♘h4 ♕h5 13 g3 would leave White with an overwhelming position, as we can respond to 13...♘g6 with 14 f3! ♘xe5 15 fxg4 ♘xg4 16 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 17 ♕f3 and Black's king has become a big problem.

8 ♖e1 fxe5 9 ♖xe5 ♕f6 10 ♘c3 d6 11 ♖e1



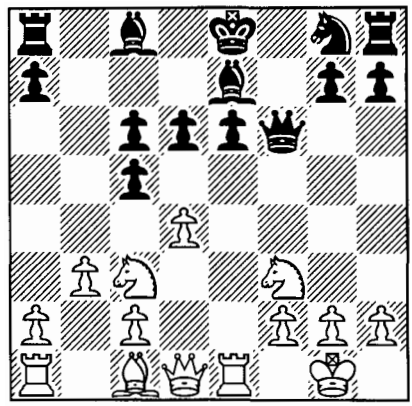
Black has invested a lot of time to exchange the e-pawn. Now if he had time to play ...e6-e5, ...♗f8-e7, ...♘g8-h6-f5 and ...0-0 then he would have a great position. Fortunately he simply does not have the time, as Ehlvest illustrates.

11...♗e7

11...e5 12 d4! cxd4 13 ♗g5 ♕e6 14 ♘xd4 ♕g4 15 ♘xc6! ♕xg5 16 ♘b5 ♗h3 17 ♕d5 leaves Black with no good defence to the threats of ♘b5-c7+ and 18 ♘c6xe5: for example, 17...♘f6 (17...♖c8 18 ♘xe5! crashes through) 18 ♖xe5+! dxe5 19 ♘c7 mate.

12 d4!

Opening up the centre is the best way to exploit our large lead in development.



12...cxd4 13 ♘xd4 d5

13...c5 14 ♘db5 is of course unthinkable for Black.

14 ♗b2 ♗d7 15 ♘a4 ♕h6 16 ♕e2

16 h3! would deny Black any hope, since 16...c5 is met by 17 ♘xc5! ♗xc5 18 ♘xe6! ♗xe6 19 ♕xd5 when Black's position collapses.

16...♗d6 17 g3

17 f4! was very strong, not allowing Black the option looked at in the next note, and after 17...♕xf4 18 g3 ♕f7 19 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 20 ♗xg7! Black is lost.

17...♔f7?!

17...e5! is very risky, but obligatory as

otherwise Black is squashed without a fight. Now 18 ♗c1!? looks the simplest: for example, 18...♕f6 19 ♗f4 e4 20 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 21 f3 ♘f6 22 fxe4 ♘xe4 23 ♘c3 0-0 24 ♘xe4 dxe4 25 ♕c4+ winning a pawn.

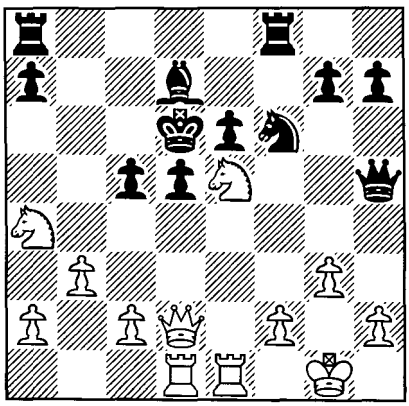
18 ♘f3!

White resumes possession of the e5-square and is in full control.

18...♘f6 19 ♗e5 ♔e7 20 ♗xd6+ ♔xd6 21 ♘e5

21 ♕e5+ ♔e7 22 ♘c5 was a straightforward winning approach, but Ehlvest's choice is good too.

21...♖hf8 22 ♖ad1 ♕h5 23 ♕d2 c5



24 ♘c3?!

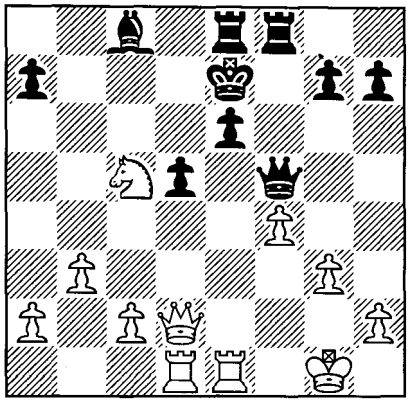
Ehlvest errs and gives Vaisser a lifeline. 24 ♘xc5! ♔xc5 25 ♘xd7+ ♘xd7 26 ♖xe6 would have won on the spot.

24...♖ae8 25 ♕d3 ♘g4 26 ♘xg4 ♕xg4 27 ♘e4+?!

I presume White was getting into deep time trouble. The simple 27 ♕a6+ ♔c7 (27...♔e7 28 ♘xd5+ ♔f7 29 ♘e3 also wins the bishop) 28 ♕xa7+ ♔c6 allowed White to win in a variety of ways, the most aesthetic being 29 ♖xd5! exd5 30 ♕a6+ ♔c7 31 ♘xd5+ ♔b8 32 ♕b6+ ♔a8 33 ♘c7 mate.

27...♔e7 28 ♘xc5 ♕f5 29 ♕d2 ♗c8 30 f4

White is still a pawn up with an overwhelming position, but Ehlvest continues to fail to kill off the contest.



30...♔f7 31 c4 dxc4 32 ♘e4 ♔g8 33 bxc4

33 ♘d6 ♕c5+ 34 ♕d4 ♕xd4+ 35 ♖xd4 ♖e7 36 ♖xc4 was more accurate.

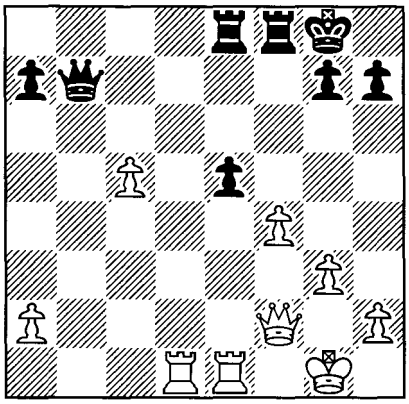
33...♗b7 34 ♘d6 ♕c5+ 35 ♕f2

35 ♕e3 was a more active square.

35...♕c6 36 ♘xb7 ♕xb7

Vaisser must have been very happy to reach this position. He is still a pawn down and has severe problems with his position, but at least he's managed to get his king to safety.

37 c5 e5



38 ♕e3!?

It's generally not advised to imbalance the position when you're material up, but I'm sure White knew what he was doing!

38...exf4 39 ♕xe8 ♖xe8 40 ♖xe8+ ♔f7 41 ♖e5 fxg3 42 hxg3 ♕b2

This is Black's best position since move 5! However, White still has the better chances and eventually wins a prolonged battle.

43 ♖d7+ ♔f6 44 ♖ed5 ♕a1+ 45 ♔h2

45 ♖d1! ♕xa2 46 c6 ♕b3 47 ♖1d3 was a better way of doing things, as the c6-pawn is poisoned due to the check on d6.

45...♕xa2+ 46 ♔h3 ♕b1

With White's king so exposed, the result should really be a draw now.

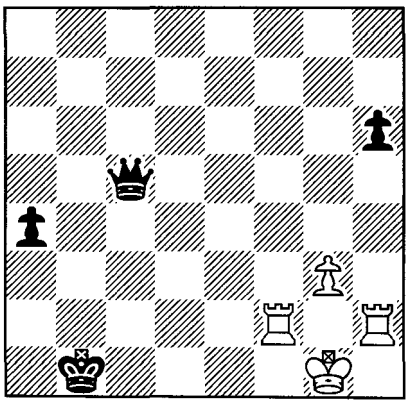
47 ♖5d6+ ♔e5 48 ♖xg7 ♕h1+ 49 ♔g4 ♕e4+ 50 ♔h3 ♕h1+ 51 ♔g4 ♕e4+ 52 ♔g5 ♕e3+ 53 ♔h4 ♕e4+ 54 ♖g4 ♕h1+ 55 ♔g5 ♕c1+ 56 ♖f4 ♕xc5 57 ♖a6 ♕e3 58 ♔h4 ♕g1 59 ♖a5+ ♔e6 60 ♖a6+ ♔e5 61 ♖a2 ♕h1+ 62 ♔g5 h6+ 63 ♔g4 ♕d1+ 64 ♔h3 ♕h1+ 65 ♖h2 ♕d1 66 ♖hf2 ♕h1+ 67 ♔g4 ♕d1+ 68 ♖2f3 ♕h1?!

White cannot move, so it was time to get the a-pawn moving with 68...a5, when White would have had to take perpetual himself.

69 ♖f5+ ♔e4 70 ♖3f4+ ♔e3 71 ♖e5+ ♔d2 72 ♖a5 ♔c2 73 ♖f3 ♔b2 74 ♖h5!

Suddenly Black's king is in trouble.

74...♕c1 75 ♖h2+ ♔b1 76 ♔h3 a5 77 ♖ff2 a4 78 ♔g2 ♕c6+ 79 ♔g1 ♕c5

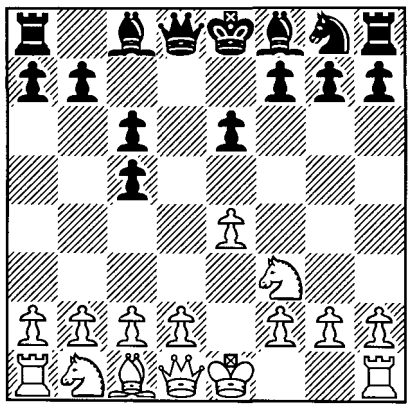


80 ♖h1! ♕c1+ 81 ♔g2 1-0

A neat finish but of course the game should have been finished about 55 moves earlier!

Game 51
L.Psakhis-N.Stanec
Pula Zonal 2000

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 e6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6?!



Coupled with ...e6, this move doesn't really make any sense. It is the main line in the ...g6 lines because it allows the bishop to be developed freely, but here the e6-pawn merely gets in the way. Undoubtedly ...dxc6 is worse strategically than ...bxc6. Remember the axiom: when in doubt always capture towards the centre. Here Black voluntarily gives up the centre and all his hopes of breaking out with ...d7-d5.

5 d3

This makes sense now that Black cannot free himself with ...d7-d5, although 5 b3 was once tried by Kasimdzhanov here.

5...♘e7

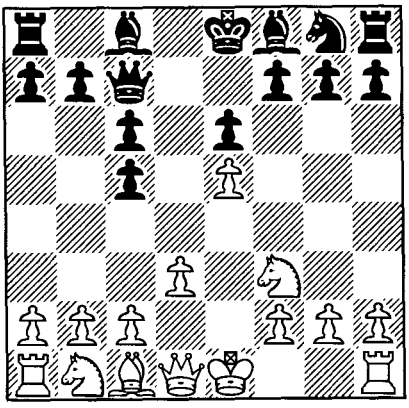
Black's position may not look so bad in these positions, but he has two big problems. Primarily he is passive; it is very hard for him to drum up any play, and so he

must sit and wait for White to finally decide how to make progress. Secondly, he is worse strategically and will have severe long-term difficulties with his worse structure. Here he has also tried:

a) 5...c4?! 6 dxc4 ♕xd1+ 7 ♔xd1 ♗c5 8 ♔e2 gave Black nothing for the pawn in M.Ly-Pa.Taylor, Perth 2004.

b) 5...♘f6 6 ♘bd2 ♗e7 7 e5 ♘d5 8 ♘e4 h6 9 ♕e2 b5?! (obviously the pawns aren't talking to one another; how is the c5-pawn to be defended in the long term?) 10 0-0 ♕c7 11 c4! (fix, attack and capture!) 11...♘b6 12 ♗f4 (12 ♗e3 ♘d7 13 cxb5!? cxb5 14 ♖ac1 ♗b7 15 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 16 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 17 d4 would win a pawn) 12...0-0 13 b3 ♗b7 14 ♕e3 ♘d7 15 ♖fe1 ♖fd8 was S.Fedorchuk-B.Camus, Cappelle la Grande 2005, when 16 ♘f6+! was the most dynamic: 16...gxf6 (16...♘xf6 17 exf6 ♗d6 18 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 19 ♘e5 leaves White strategically winning, as 19...gxf6 20 ♕xh6 fxe5 21 ♖e4 is mating) 17 exf6 ♗d6 18 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 19 ♕xh6 ♕f8 20 ♕g5+ ♔h8 21 ♖e4 mates. Again notice how useless the b7-bishop has been.

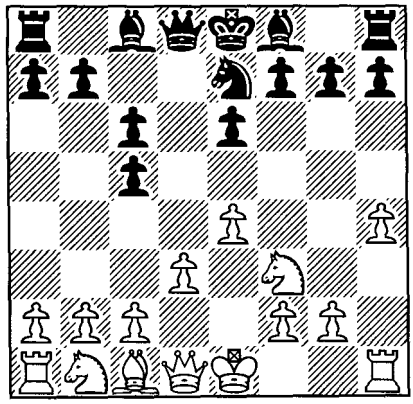
c) 5...♕c7, preparing ...e6-e5, has been Black's most common try. We should play 6 e5 when White has done very well:



c1) 6...b6 7 ♘bd2 ♗a6 was R.Ovetchkin-S.Kalygin, Tula 2002, when 8 ♘e4! would prevent Black from ever developing his kingside knight, so he is obliged to play 8...f5, but 9 exf6 gxf6 10 0-0 0-0-0 11 ♖e1 e5 12 ♘fd2 ♔b8 13 ♕f3 leaves White with strong pressure against Black's weak pawns and lots of promising squares for his knight-pair.

c2) 6...♘e7 7 b3 ♘f5 8 ♗b2 h5 9 ♘bd2 ♗e7 10 ♘e4 ♗d7 11 ♘fd2 0-0-0 12 ♘c4 (White's knights totally dominate the board) 12...♔b8 13 a4 b6 14 a5 b5 15 ♘cd6 ♘xd6 16 exd6 ♗xd6 17 ♗xg7 ♖h7 18 ♗f6 ♖g8 19 ♕e2! ♗e5 was J.Arizmendi Martinez-L.Mullor Gomez, Aragon 2003, when White could have killed Black off with 20 ♘xc5! ♗xf6 21 ♘a6+ ♔b7 22 ♘xc7 ♗xa1 (22...♗c3+ 23 ♔f1 ♗xa1 24 ♘xb5 is similar; White doesn't have to worry about 24...cxb5 25 ♕e4+ ♗c6 26 ♕xh7 ♗xg2+ 27 ♔e2 ♖g7, as 28 ♕xg7! ♗xg7 29 ♖g1 leaves him the exchange and a pawn up) 23 ♘xb5! and Black can't take the knight due to 24 ♕e4+.

6 h4



We saw this idea in the first game of the chapter. The black knight obviously wants to go g6, so we provoke a weakness on g5.

6 b3!? is still possible and was Nigel Short's choice when he reached this position. His game continued 6...♕a5+?! (this

just forces White to develop and leaves Black's queen offside) 7 ♘bd2 ♘g6 8 ♗b2 f6 9 e5! (typically we should always play this move once Black is threatening to take the e5-square himself) 9...f5 10 0-0 ♗e7 11 ♘c4 ♕c7 12 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 13 exd6 ♕xd6 14 ♗xg7 N.Short-M.Pekelman, Sao Paulo (simul) 2001, left the Englishman with a great position.

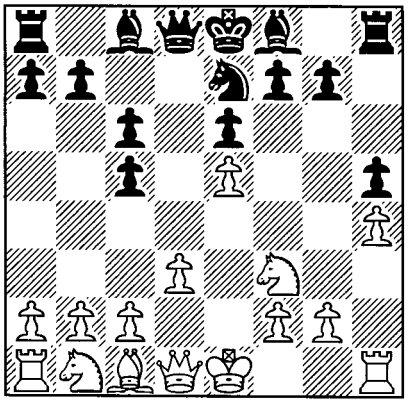
6...h5

Black has tried allowing h4-h5, but he hasn't been successful:

a) 6...f6 7 e5 ♘d5 8 h5 ♗e7 9 h6 g6 was E.Janev-S.Bardel, French League 2008, when the most straightforward looks to be 10 exf6 ♗xf6 11 ♘bd2 0-0 12 ♘e4 and Black has too many holes in his position.

b) 6...♕c7 7 h5! h6 was T.Gharamian-R.Gervasio, Le Touquet 2006, when I like the cute idea 8 ♕d2!, preventing 8...e5 and aiming to trade queens on f4 which would leave Black's position without dynamism. Instead here 7...e5 is possible, although 8 ♗e3 b6 9 ♘bd2 f6 10 a4 a5 11 c3 followed by opening up the centre with d3-d4 leaves Black's king without a safe haven.

7 e5



Without a break on the d-file, Black will suffer indefinitely. He is really struggling to find any counterplay while White has plans to use the g5- and d6- squares, coupled with his play against the c5-pawn of course.

7...♘g6 8 ♘c3 ♗e7 9 ♕e2 ♕c7

If Black chooses to take on h4, then he will lose the h5-pawn back, leaving White with an open file to play down: 9...♗xh4 10 ♘xh4 ♘xh4 11 ♘e4! and Black cannot take on g2, so will lose the pawn back on h5 and be left with terrible holes on the dark squares.

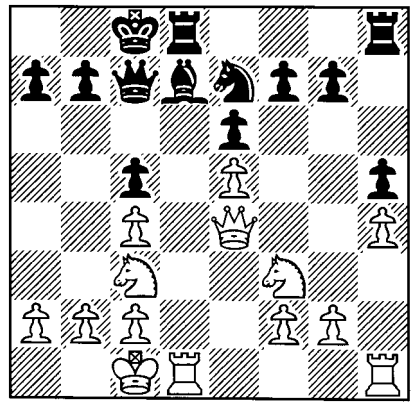
10 ♕e4 c4

Objectively this just loses a pawn, but Stanec is struggling to find any hope of activity. Instead if 10...b6 11 ♗g5 ♗b7 12 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 13 0-0-0 0-0-0 14 g3 and Black is left with absolutely no dynamism in his position and must wait while White can improve his position with ♖h1-e1, ♘f3-g5 and ♘c3-e2-f4.

11 dxc4 ♗d7 12 ♗g5 c5

Black should probably try to keep the dark-squared bishops on the board if he wants compensation. Therefore 12...♗b4 should be tried when White has the interesting dynamic option of 13 c5!? ♕a5 (13...♗xc5 14 0-0-0 ♗b6 15 ♕d3! ♗c8 16 ♘e4 is similar) 14 0-0 ♕xc5 15 ♖ad1 which leaves Black with severe problems with both his king and light-squared bishop.

13 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 14 0-0-0 0-0-0

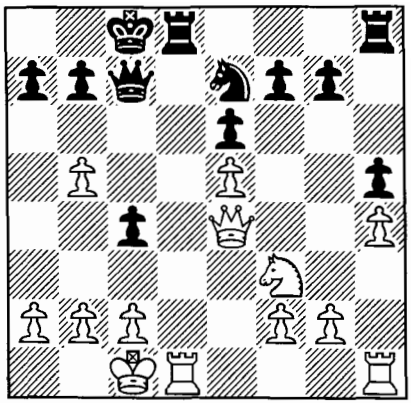


15 ♘b5

Psakhis is a pawn up and thus is happy to exchange the pieces. Gershon points out that 15 ♕f4 f6 16 ♘e4 would also leave White with a great position.

15...♗xb5 16 cxb5 c4

Gaining the d5-square for the knight, but now the c4-pawn becomes a liability. Gershon suggests 16...♘d5 17 c4 ♘b6, although 18 ♘g5 is just winning here. Black is unable to defend the f7- and h5-pawns, and down the d-file in the long term.



17 c3 ♘g6 18 ♖d4 ♖xd4 19 ♕xd4 ♖d8

Black needs to try and complicate the issue, otherwise White takes control of the d-file and thus the game. Indeed, 19...♔b8 20 ♖d1 leaves Black very passive. White will steadily improve his position and exchange queens when ready, leaving him a pawn up in a winning ending.

20 ♕xa7

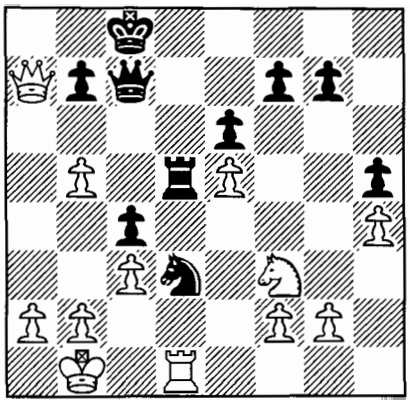
White grabs another pawn.

20...♘f4

20...♘xe5 was the alternative, but 21 ♕a8+ ♔d7 22 ♘xe5+ ♔e8 23 ♕a4 ♕xe5 24 ♕xc4 leaves White two pawns up for nebulous compensation. That said, this was probably Black's best hope.

21 ♖d1 ♘d3+ 22 ♔b1 ♖d5?!

22...♔d7 was necessary, although after 23 ♘d4 ♔e8 24 ♘c6! ♖d5 25 b3 ♖xb5 26 ♕a8+ ♔d7 27 ♘d4 ♖xe5 28 ♕f8 Black drops his kingside pawns.



23 ♕a8+?!

Sloppy. 23 b6! was winning immediately: 23...♕b8 (23...♕c6 24 ♘d4 doesn't help either) 24 ♕a4! ♔d8 25 ♕xc4 when White is three pawns up and is winning even more.

23...♕b8 24 ♕xb8+ ♔xb8 25 a4

White has missed an immediate win, but still has two extra pawns in the ending which Psakhis converts with the minimum of fuss.

25...f6

25...♔c7 26 ♔c2 b6 27 ♖d2 f5 28 exf6 gxf6 29 ♖e2 e5 30 ♘d2 would hardly help Black.

26 exf6 gxf6 27 ♔c2 ♖f5 28 b3

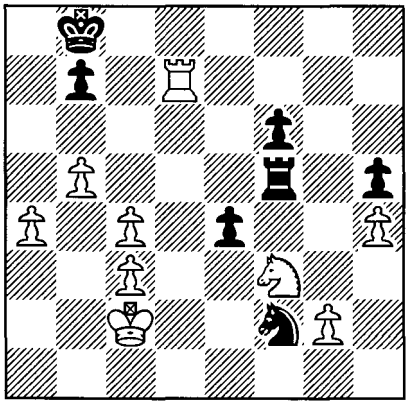
Time to make something of White's four against two majority.

28...e5

28...♘xf2 was probably best, although 29 ♖d8+ ♔c7 30 ♖h8 is winning as the queenside pawns will be too strong.

28...♘e5 29 bxc4 ♘xf3 30 gxf3 ♖xf3 31 a5 ♖xf2+ allows Black two connected passed pawns, but after 32 ♔b3 White's queenside pawn mass will break through.

29 bxc4 ♘xf2 30 ♖d7 e4



31 b6!?

Psakhis is enjoying his position, although objectively 31 ♘d4 ♖c5 32 ♖d8+ was better as 32...♔a7 33 a5! mates the black king.

31...♖c5 32 ♖d8+ ♖c8 33 ♖xc8+ ♔xc8 34 ♘d4 ♘d3 35 g3 ♘e5 36 c5 ♘d3 37 c6 bxc6 38 a5 ♔b7 39 ♘e6 f5 40 ♔d2 1-0

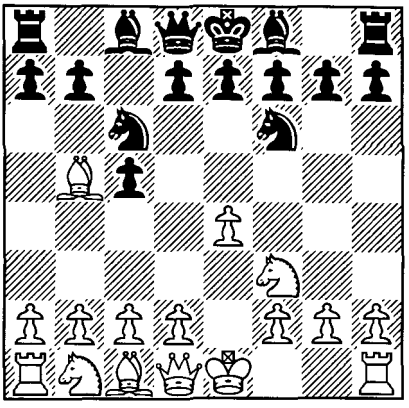
Conclusion

Thanks to the efforts of Teimour Radjabov, Black has been doing well against the main line of 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 d3 with his quick ...d5 plan. However, I believe 5 b3 to be a sound alternative and one which promises White a good game. Game 46, Janev-Matsenko, is quite an important test of our set-up and should be examined in depth, but I believe White to be doing very well.

Chapter Eight

Rossolimo Variation: Other Third Moves for Black

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6

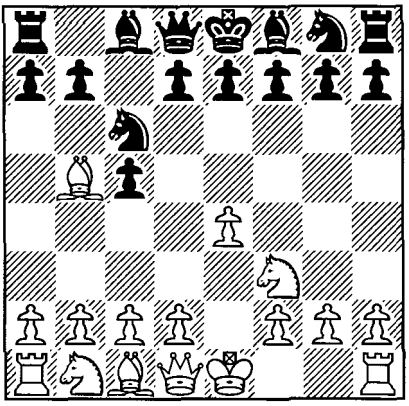


Definitely the most important move that we have yet to cover. This line has grown in popularity in the last ten years and is quite dynamic. I suggest that we continue the same theme as the previous chapters with **4 ♗xc6.** The important variations to examine are in Games 52 and 53.

In this chapter I also investigate Black's minor options. Game 58 examines the extremely rare third move 3...a6, Game 57 covers 3...e5, which is a sensible option, but leaves f7 very vulnerable, and 3...♘d4 is another line that I don't believe in but look at in Game 56. These are lines we should be aware of, but they shouldn't worry us. Games 54 and 55 need to be examined in more depth, however, covering the interesting 3...♘a5!? and the sister variations of 3...♕c7 and 3...♕b6. We should take special care against the latter two, although if you study the theory in depth, then I'm confident you will reach a comfortable middlegame.

Repertoire Outline

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5



3...♘f6

The principal subject of this chapter and a move which has recently become topical. The list of black players who've tried this reads like a who's who of the elite: Viswanathan Anand, Magnus Carlsen, Vassily Ivanchuk, Vladimir Kramnik, Alexander Morozevich and Veselin Topalov being top of the pile.

Black's other third-move options, starting with the rarest, are:

a) 3...♕a5 has been tried by the Spanish Grandmaster Vallejo Pons, but seems rather dubious to me.

b) 3...d5?! just looks like a very bad Centre-Counter.

c) And 3...b6 is also a poor choice. These are all examined in the notes to Game 58.

d) 3...e5, aiming to take control of the centre, is played fairly often and has been tried twice by the inventive Russian Grandmaster Vadim Zvjaginsev. However, this seems premature and is investigated in Game 57.

e) 3...♘a5, however, is a sensible alternative if Black wants an unusual game and is a favourite of Croatian GM Zdenko Kozul – see Game 55.

f) 3...♘d4 has been played surprisingly often, but doesn't impress when there's no knight on c3, as we'll see in Game 56.

g) With 3...♕c7 Black avoids his c-pawns being doubled.

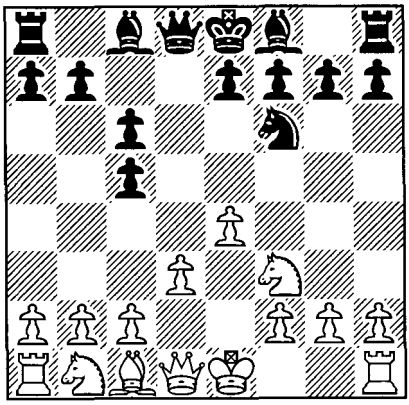
h) Its sister variation is 3...♕b6 which Black also often employs, but in both cases with dynamic play White can grab a strong initiative. Game 54 shows how we can make Black's life a misery.

i) 3...a6 is another move played surprisingly often (over 1300 games in the *Mega Database 2010*!), but appears to just lose a tempo, as we'll see in Game 58.

4 ♗xc6 dxc6

4...bxc6 is quite similar to Game 34, Steingrimsson-Slingerland, and will be examined in Game 52.

5 d3



Now:

a) 5...g6 6 h3 ♗g7 transposes to the 3...g6, 4...dxc6 variation of Chapter Six.

b) 5...♘d7, keeping the bishop-pair, is covered in Game 53 together with Black's alternatives.

c) 5...♗g4 6 h3 and here Black can choose whether to try and keep the bishop-pair or accept he's slightly worse and exchange on f3. Both are featured in Game 52.

Game 52
S.Rublevsky-Ni Hua
Ningbo (rapid) 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6

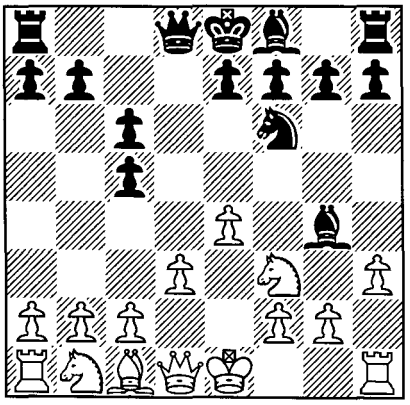
Usually played. Instead 4...bxc6 5 e5 ♘d5 6 0-0 g6 7 c4 ♘c7 is close to a transposition to Steingrimsson-Slingerland covered in Chapter Six, but here White has more flexibility as he is not yet committed to ♖f1-e1: 8 d4 (8 ♖e1 ♗g7 would be a direct transposition and 8 b3 could be considered here too) 8...cxd4 9 ♕xd4 ♗g7 10 ♕h4 (again 10

♖e1 would transpose) 10...♘e6 11 ♘c3 0-0 (S.Kalvaitis-E.Escobar Felix, Kemer 2007) when 12 ♗h6 would give White a very strong attack.

5 d3 ♗g4

This is the principal line if Black does not wish to simply transpose back into the realm of Chapter Six 5...g6 6 h3 ♗g7. 5...♘d7 is the other independent attempt and will be examined in the next game.

6 h3



Hitting the bishop immediately is the most accurate. The position is very similar to Adams-Meins in Chapter Six, but with an important difference. There the pawn was on g6 and the knight still on g8.

6 ♘bd2 is not so accurate here, as after 6...♘d7 7 h3 Black isn't obliged to take, in comparison with the ...g6 lines where the bishop would get trapped: 7...♗h5 8 g4 ♗g6 9 ♘c4 f6 with a complex position. White has scored well from here, including another loss by Ni Hua against an opponent who he outranked by 300 points, but I think the game continuation is a better try for the advantage.

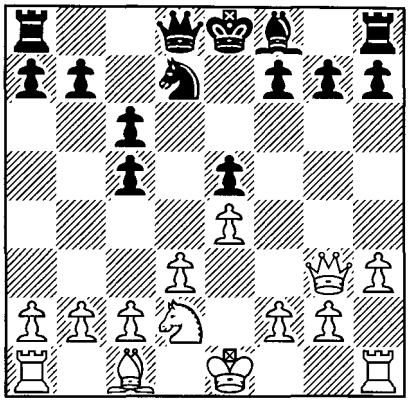
6...♗h5

This is a more aggressive attempt than 6...♗xf3 7 ♕xf3 after which Black must be slightly worse:

a) 7...♘d7 8 0-0 g6 9 ♗d2!? (I like this idea against Black's ...g6; the idea is to trade off the dark-squared bishops, leaving White with a concrete edge) 9...♗g7 10 ♗c3 0-0 11 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 12 ♘d2 e5 13 ♕g3 ♕f6 14 ♘c4 ♕f4 15 ♕xf4 exf4 16 a4 and White converted his endgame advantage in N.Sedlak-S.Martinovic, Nova Gorica 2009.

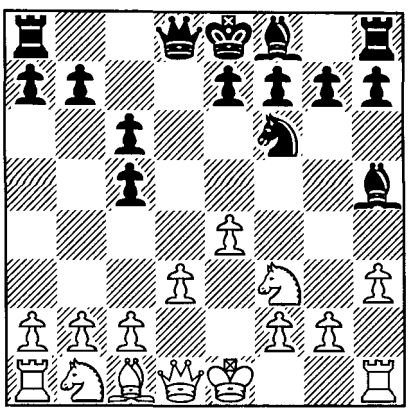
b) 7...g6 8 ♗d2!? (immediately neutralizing Black's bishop) 8...♗g7 9 ♗c3 0-0 10 ♘d2 ♘e8 11 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 12 ♕e3 (it's also possible to play more aggressively with 12 h4!?) 12...♘e6 13 0-0-0 ♕d4 14 ♘f3 ♕xe3+ 15 fxe3 was a little better for White thanks to his better structure and he slowly brought in the full point in L.Nisipeanu-M.Gagunashvili, Saint Vincent 2004.

c) After 7...e5 8 ♘d2 (8 ♕g3 ♕d6 9 ♘d2 was similar and left White with a very pleasant position after 9...♘d7 10 ♘c4 ♕g6 11 ♕g4! ♕xg4 12 hxg4 with promising play on both flanks, J.Lopez Martinez-V.Cmilyte, Novi Sad 2009) 8...♘d7 9 ♕g3! it was rather awkward to develop Black's kingside.



In S.Rublevsky-M.Gagunashvili, Rethymnon 2003, he tried 9...♕f6 10 ♘c4 ♗e7 11 f4 (the typical breakthrough, leaving White firmly on top) 11...exf4 12 ♗xf4 0-0 (McShane later tried defending Black's position with 12...♕g6 13 0-0 0-0 14 ♕xg6 hxg6

in T.Nedev-L.McShane, Mallorca Olympiad 2004, when Palliser suggests 15 ♖ae1 intending e5-e6, keeping full control of the position) 13 0-0 b6 14 ♘e3! ♕g6 (14...♕xb2?! is far too risky: 15 ♘f5 ♗f6 16 ♖ab1 ♕c3 17 ♖b3 as given by Rublevsky himself, is very strong as 17...♗d4+ – 17...♕xc2?! 18 e5! wins instantly – 18 ♔h2 ♕a5 19 ♕g4! ♗f6 20 ♘h6+ ♔h8 21 ♕xd7 looks terrible for Black) 15 ♘f5 ♗f6 16 ♕f3 ♖fe8 17 c3 ♖ad8 18 ♖ad1 ♘e5 (possibly the decisive mistake as White now gains time to push in the centre and bring his rook over to the kingside; 18...♗e5 is Erenburg's suggestion, but 19 d4 cxd4 20 cxd4 ♗xf4 21 ♕xf4 is very good for White) 19 ♕e2 ♗g5?! (19...♘c4! 20 ♗h2 ♘a5 looks bizarre, but was necessary) 20 d4! cxd4 21 cxd4 ♘d7 22 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 23 ♖d3 ♘f6 24 ♖g3 ♖xe4 25 ♕f2 1-0. It all looked very easy.



7 ♘c3!?

An interesting new try by Rublevsky, and seeing as he repeated it in the next game, obviously a product of his home preparation. The idea is to keep the c1-h6 diagonal open for the bishop so that we can prevent Black from playing ...e7-e5. Alternatives are:

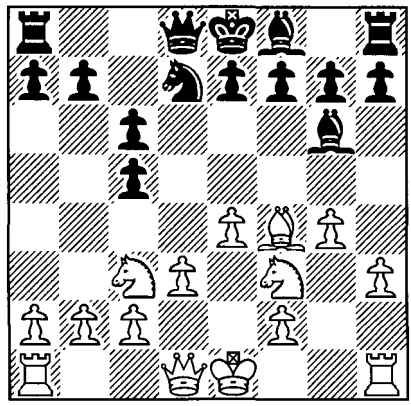
a) 7 g4 ♗g6 8 e5 ♘d5 9 e6!? is an interesting pawn sacrifice suggested by Richard Palliser which is yet to be played. Perhaps Black should continue 9...♕c7!?.

b) 7 ♗f4 is a similar idea, but here Black can play 7...c4, getting rid of his structural weakness, A.Grischuk-A.Kolev, Mainz (rapid) 2005.

7...♘d7

Preparing ...e7-e5. I wonder whether 7...♕c7 will be tried in the future to prevent White's 9th move. However, 8 g4 ♗g6 9 ♘h4 e5 (9...e6 10 f4 looks extremely risky, since in the long term the bishop looks like it will drop) 10 ♕f3 0-0-0 11 ♗g5 ♗e7 12 ♘f5 ♗xf5 13 ♕xf5+ ♔b8 14 0-0-0 g6 15 ♕f3 ♘e8 16 ♗e3 f6 17 h4 leaves White with the more comfortable position.

8 g4 ♗g6 9 ♗f4!



Preventing Black's break and leaving him with some problems.

9...e6

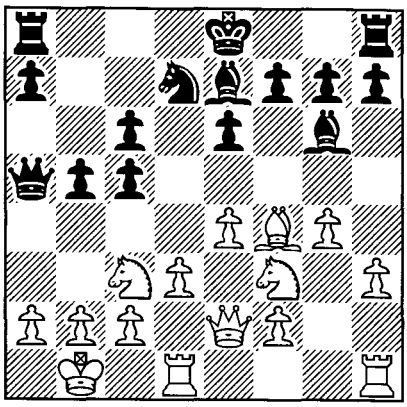
9...f6 10 e5! would again prevent Black taking over the centre.

10 ♕e2 ♗e7

10...h5 was tried a couple of days later, but didn't solve Black's problems: 11 0-0-0 ♗e7 12 ♔b1 ♕a5 13 ♗g3 0-0-0 14 ♘d2 b5 15 e5 ♕c7 16 f4 (16 ♘ce4!? is possible as 16...♘xe5?! 17 ♘xc5! ♗xc5 18 ♗xe5 picks up a pawn) 16...♘b6 17 ♘ce4 hxg4 18 hxg4 ♖xh1 19 ♖xh1 c4 20 dxc4 ♗xe4 21 ♘xe4 ♘xc4 22 b3 ♘b6 was S.Rublevsky-Wang

Hao Ningbo (rapid) 2010, when 23 ♖h7! ♗f8 24 f5 ♕d7 25 ♗h4 ♕d1+ 26 ♕xd1 ♖xd1+ 27 ♔b2 ♘d7 28 ♖h8! would have left White with a probable winning advantage.

11 0-0-0 ♕a5 12 ♔b1 b5



A fairly typical position has been reached. White will press on the kingside and Black on the queenside. However, I think White has the easier plan. Black's bishop on g6 is blocked right out of the game and Ni Hua will have to be careful it doesn't become trapped during a white pawn storm. Meanwhile it's not clear how Black gets any further with his attacking ideas on the queenside as White's position is very solid.

13 ♕e3!

Opening up the e2-square for the knight and a path to the kingside.

13...b4 14 ♘e2 ♕b5 15 ♘g3

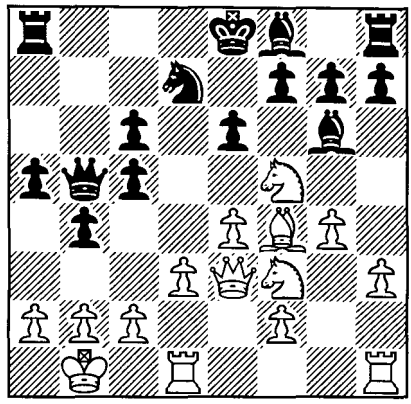
Rublevsky has found a very promising square for the knight. 15 ♗g3!? was an alternative, more positional approach. The idea is to play ♘e2-f4 and then h3-h4 when Black will have to make a major structural concession to save the bishop.

Probably Black should try 15...h6 immediately, but 16 h4 a5 17 h5 ♗h7 18 g5 hxg5 19 h6! g6 20 ♘xg5 (the h7-bishop looks very stupid) 20...a4 can be met by 21 c4! bxc3 22 ♘xc3 ♕b7 23 a3 when Black isn't getting any further in his queenside ambitions, as 23...c4 24 dxc4 ♗xa3 25 ♕d2 leaves White firmly on top. It's important that the g3-bishop prevents Black from playing his rook to the b-file.

15...a5 16 ♘f5

A strong idea, but I think it was worth delaying it for a move. 16 h4! h6 17 ♘f5! is better, as now after 17...exf5 18 exf5 Black still cannot keep his bishop: 18...♗h7? (or 18...♘f6 19 fxg6 and compared to the next note, Black can no longer take with the h-pawn, while 19...fxg6 20 ♕e6 is completely winning) 19 ♖he1 wins the e7-bishop.

16...♗f8



This is a very passive approach. 16...exf5 looks risky with the king stuck in the centre, but was Black's best try: 17 exf5 ♘f6 18 fxg6 hxg6 19 ♗d6 ♘d5 20 ♕e5 0-0 21 ♗xe7 ♖ae8 is only a little better for White.

17 ♗d6

With a longer time control I dare say Rublevsky would have found 17 ♘d2!, threatening to jump into c4 and d6. After 17...♘b6 18 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 19 ♗xd6 Black will lose at least a pawn as after 19...c4?! (19...♘a4 20 ♘c4 leaves Black busted) 20 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 21 dxc4 ♕xc4? 22 ♕b6 ♖d8 23 ♗xb4! he is mated.

17...f6

Ni Hua still had to get rid of the f5-knight: 17...♗xf5 18 ♗xf8 ♗xe4 (18...♔xf8 19 gxf5 exf5 20 ♘h4! fxe4 21 ♘f5! leaves White with a decisive initiative) 19 ♗xg7 ♗xf3 20 ♕xf3 ♖g8 21 c4 bxc3 22 ♗xc3 ♘b6 looks unpleasant for Black, but was his best hope.

18 d4

This wins White a pawn, but Rublevsky had other very tempting options: 18 e5! looks like the most dynamic option: for example, 18...♗xf5 19 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 20 gxf5 when it's unlikely that the Black king will survive. 18 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 19 ♘d6 ♕b8 20 ♘c4 e5 21 g5 also gives White good attacking chances.

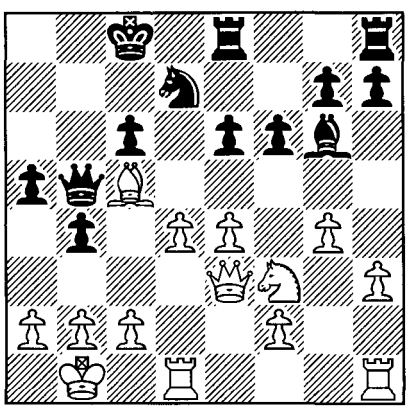
18...0-0-0

18...cxd4? 19 ♘3xd4 ♕c4 20 b3 drops the e6-pawn and then more, while 18...c4 19 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 20 ♘d6 ♕a6 21 h4 h5 22 g5 should also give White a decisive attack.

19 ♘e7+ ♗xe7

19...♔b7 20 dxc5 is scarcely any better.

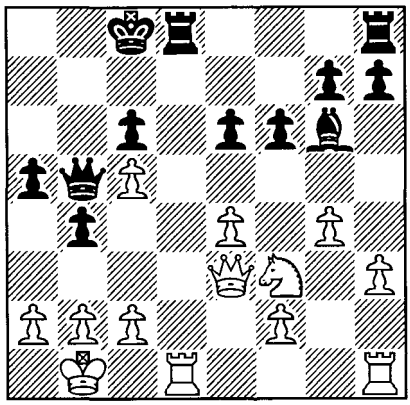
20 ♗xe7 ♖de8 21 ♗xc5



21...♘xc5?!

This leaves Ni Hua in a terrible position and a pawn down. 21...e5! was forced: 22 ♗d6 ♕b6 23 ♖he1 exd4 24 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 25 ♖xd4 c5 26 ♗xc5! ♘xc5 27 ♖c4 ♔b7 28 ♖xc5 ♗xe4 29 ♘d4 leaves White a pawn up in the endgame, although Black has some drawing chances.

22 dxc5 ♖d8



23 ♖d6

23 b3, preventing any bank-rank problems, would be a little more accurate.

23...♖xd6 24 cxd6 ♖d8 25 ♖d1

Temporarily sacrificing a pawn with 25 e5! fxe5 26 ♘xe5 ♖xd6 27 b3 ♖d5 28 ♖e1 would have left White completely dominant.

25...c5?!

Rublevsky wasn't yet threatening ♕e3-a7 due to his back-rank issues so Ni Hua should have tried 25...♕c4 which would be slightly awkward to deal with, although 26 ♘e1! ♕xe4 27 ♕c5 ♔b7 28 d7 should prove decisive, in view of Black's loose king and White's strong d-pawn.

26 b3!

Back in control.

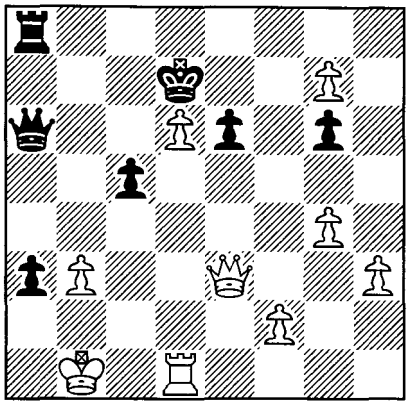
26...a4 27 ♘h4

27 e5 was very strong too, but I imagine Rublevsky didn't want to allow Ni Hua's bishop into the game.

27...♔d7 28 ♘xg6 hxg6 29 e5 axb3 30 cxb3 ♖a8 31 exf6 ♕a6

Or 31...gxf6 32 ♕h6 and Black won't survive for long.

32 a4! bxa3 33 fxg7



Ni Hua no longer has any swindling chances and Rublevsky converts comfortably.

33...♕b7 34 ♖c1 a2+ 35 ♔a1 ♖c8 36 ♕d3 ♕b4 37 ♕c3

The computer doesn't like this move. Indeed it goes from +6 to +1, but the endgame is easily winning.

37...♕xc3+ 38 ♖xc3 ♖g8 39 ♖xc5 ♔xd6 40 ♖c3 ♖xg7 41 ♔xa2 ♖f7 42 f3 e5 43 b4 ♖h7 44 ♔b3 ♖xh3 45 b5 ♖h1 46 ♔b4 ♖b1+ 47 ♔a5 ♖a1+ 48 ♔b6 ♔d5 49 ♖c5+ ♔d4 50 ♔c6 e4 51 fxe4 ♖a8 52 ♖g5 1-0

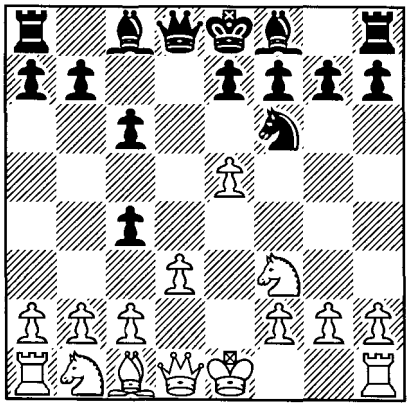
Game 53
A.Morozevich-M.Carlsen
Biel 2006

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 d3 ♘d7

Here I should also mention:

a) 5...♕c7 is the other way to erect the central pawn barrier, but Black will have to lose further time moving his knight to support it. F.Bellini-D.Collutiis, Arvier 2008, continued 6 0-0 e5 7 ♘bd2 ♗e7 (7...b5?! is the computer's suggestion, but this leaves Black with long-term structural problems) 8 ♘c4 ♘d7 9 ♗d2 0-0 10 a4 b6 11 ♗c3 f6 12 ♘h4 ♖d8 13 ♘f5 ♘f8 14 ♕g4 and White had a strong kingside initiative.

b) 5...c4 must always be checked, but here it doesn't cause White any problems after 6 e5:



b1) 6...♘d7?! 7 e6!? (to be honest 7 dxc4 looks like an extra pawn) 7...♘e5! 8 exf7+ ♘xf7 9 dxc4 ♕xd1+ 10 ♔xd1 ♗g4 11 ♗e3 g6 12 ♘bd2 ♗g7 13 ♔c1 gave Black insufficient compensation in S.Arkhipov-M.Mrva, German League 1993.

b2) After 6...♘g4 we can no longer take the c4-pawn, but 7 d4 erects a useful-looking centre. Indeed, after 7...h5 (G.Churgulia-M.Gagunashvili, Batumi 2003) 8 0-0 ♗e6 9 ♕e2 g6 10 b3 cxb3 11 axb3 White has a great position.

6 ♗f4

A sensible way to prevent Black's plan of central control. The position is quite similar to the previous game, but Black's bishop is still on c8, meaning he can fianchetto on the kingside without having to worry about the bishop getting trapped.

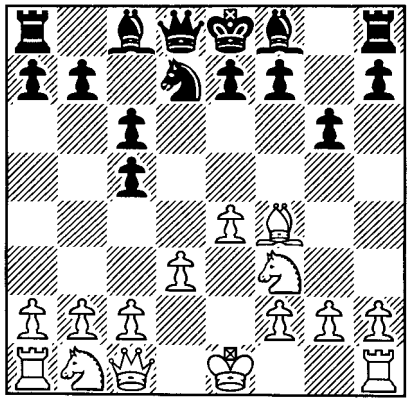
6 e5 is the alternative approach, but I'd prefer not to give up control of the central light squares until I'm forced to.

6...g6

H.Nezad-Y.Vovk, Moscow 2009, saw in-

stead 6...f6 7 e5 (definitely critical, preventing Black's ...e7-e5) 7...♘b6 (7...♕b6?! 8 ♘bd2 ♕xb2 9 0-0 looks far too risky a pawn grab to me with Black's king stuck in the centre) 8 h3 ♗f5 9 ♘bd2 ♕d5 10 a4 g5 11 ♗g3 ♗g7 12 a5 ♘d7 13 ♘c4 ♗g6 14 0-0 ♘xe5 when 15 ♗xe5 fxe5 16 ♘e3 ♕d7 17 ♘xg5 would have left White clearly better with his safer king and Black's fractured pawns.

7 ♕c1



Defending the b2-pawn and preparing to exchange the dark-squared bishops.

7...♗g7

This is given as dubious by Carlsen himself. Carlsen comments that he should have continued with 7...h6, hoping to obtain a position similar to that of Sutovsky-Baron in Chapter Six. We could continue 8 ♘bd2 (the plan with 8 ♗d2!? ♗g7 9 ♗c3 e5 10 a4 0-0 11 ♘a3 wouldn't be totally ridiculous either) 8...♗g7 9 ♘c4 with a decent position.

8 ♗h6 ♕a5+!

This move is necessary to try and cause some disharmony in White's ranks.

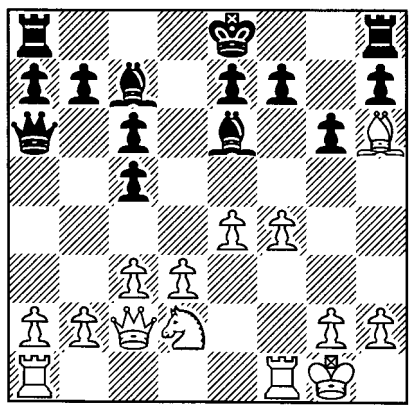
9 c3

This move isn't a major inconvenience, but we have to watch out for our d3-pawn now. Instead 9 ♘c3!? is an interesting pawn sacrifice suggested by Rowson, but probably not completely sound. Following 9...♗xc3+ 10 bxc3, 10...♘e5! looks like a surprising antidote: 11 ♘xe5 ♕xc3+ 12 ♗d2 ♕xe5 13 c4 0-0 14 ♗c3 ♕d6 and White probably doesn't have enough for the pawn.

9...♘e5 10 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 11 ♘d2 ♕a6

Carlsen explains that he didn't want to play this strange-looking move, putting his queen offside, but he didn't like the following variation: 11...♗e6 12 ♘b3 ♕b5 (12...♕b6 13 ♗e3 ♗xb3 14 axb3 favours White as Black has nothing to show for a compromised structure and lack of central control) 13 c4 ♕b6 14 ♗e3 (personally I would be tempted by 14 0-0 0-0-0 15 f4 with a promising position as Black cannot play 15...♗d4+ 16 ♘xd4 ♖xd4? due to 17 ♗g7) when he assessed that 14...♖d8 gave Black insufficient play for the pawn. Here 15 ♘xc5!? looks interesting (15 ♗xc5 would be the normal route), when the forcing line 15...♗xb2 16 ♘xe6 ♕a5+ 17 ♗d2 ♕e5 18 f4! ♗xc1 19 fxe5 ♗xd2+ 20 ♔xd2 fxe6 would leave Black in an unpleasant double-rook ending with problems on the b- and f-files.

12 ♕c2 ♗e6 13 f4 ♗c7 14 0-0

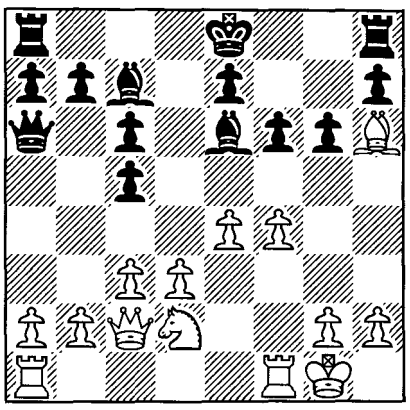


So an unusual position has been reached. Carlsen has succeeded in prevent-

ing the trade of dark-squared bishops, but has lost time and is now forced to go long with his own king. He provoked us into weakening our d3-pawn, but White has a pleasant space advantage, our typical structural edge and Black's queen is rather out of place. Black also has to watch out for f4-f5.

14...f6

Opening up a square for the bishop on f7 as a defence against the f4-f5 break. Rowson suggests that Black should allow it with 14...0-0-0, although he admits that 15 f5 gxf5 16 exf5 ♗d7 17 ♖ae1 ♖de8 favours White with the rather cryptic comment 'White looks better here, but perhaps the future belongs to Black.' I presume he is referring to Black's possibilities with the bishop-pair, but the present definitely belongs to White and following 18 ♘e4 b6 19 a4 ♖hg8 20 ♗f4 ♗xf4 21 ♖xf4 I can't really see what future Black can look forward to.



15 c4!

Blocking the queen further in and indirectly defending d3.

15...0-0-0 16 a4!

Continuing the same theme. Morozevich intends to trap the queen.

16...♖d7

16...♗a5 17 ♘b3 ♗b4 reroutes the bishop to an outpost, but after 18 f5 (18 a5 is Carlsen's suggestion, when he writes that his position 'is fairly cheerless, with the queen totally out of play') 18...♗f7 19 ♗e3 b6 20 a5 White will crash through regardless.

17 a5 ♖hd8 18 ♖a3 ♗xa5

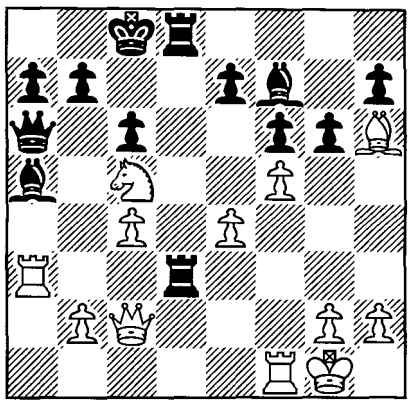
This move is extremely risky, but otherwise Black's queen won't take any further part in the game.

19 f5

Morozevich opens up lines for his bishop to return to the game.

19...♗f7 20 fxg6

As Morozevich gets a clear advantage with this move it can hardly be criticized. Nonetheless, 20 ♘b3 is the most critical move and should be investigated. Carlsen gives 20...♖xd3 21 ♘xc5, reaching a totally chaotic position:



a) 21...♕xc4?! 22 ♕xc4 ♗xc4 23 ♘xd3 ♗b6+ 24 ♘f2 ♗xf1 25 ♔xf1 should be winning for White.

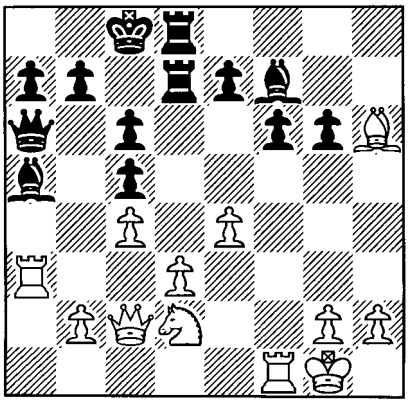
b) 21...♕b6 22 ♖xa5 ♖3d4 (22...g5! isn't mentioned and is stronger, although 23 b4! still looks to favour White) 23 ♕b3! and White has a good chance of converting his extra material.

c) 21...♗b6 22 ♖xa6 ♗xc5+ 23 ♔h1 bxa6 is very similar to the game. Carlsen thinks

White is better after 24 b3, but I'm not convinced as after 24...g5! Black has more pieces working in the position.

Therefore we can say that Morozevich made the right decision, both objectively and practically.

20...hxg6



21 e5 ♗e6

Magnus is happy to sacrifice any material for the initiative. Otherwise:

a) 21...♕b6 would keep the queen, but 22 ♖fa1 ♗b4 23 ♖xa7 (Carlsen) is totally winning for White, due to the idea of 24 e6 and 25 ♖a8+;

b) 21...f5 is not mentioned by either Rowson or Carlsen. The move keeps temporary material equality, although Black is rather passive and 22 ♖c1! (22 ♘b3 ♖xd3 23 ♘xc5 ♗b6 24 ♖xa6 ♗xc5+ 25 ♔h1 bxa6 is again not totally clear) 22...♗g8 23 ♘b3 ♖xd3 24 ♖xa5 ♕xc4 (24...♕b6 25 ♘xc5!) 25 ♕xc4 ♗xc4 26 ♖xc4 ♖xb3 27 ♖c2 leaves White with a big advantage in the endgame.

22 exf6

This gives White the advantage, but in a really unbalanced position. 22 ♘e4! is a suggestion by Rowson, with the idea of 22...♗f5 23 e6! ♗xe6 24 ♘xc5 ♕b6 25 ♖xa5 ♕xa5 26 ♘xe6 and White is firmly on top.

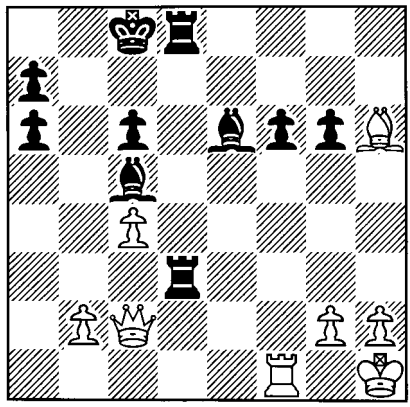
22...exf6 23 ♘b3

We saw the ideas behind this move in the note to White's 20th. Carlsen is now forced to randomize.

23...♖xd3 24 ♘xc5 ♗b6!

The queen sacrifice is Black's only hope. Both 24...♕b6?! 25 ♖xa5 and 24...♕xc4?! 25 ♕xc4 ♗xc4 26 ♘xd3 should be winning.

25 ♖xa6 ♗xc5+ 26 ♔h1 bxa6



27 ♗g7??

After handling the complications well, Morozevich blunders away the whole point. He should have played 27 b4! ♗b6 (the pawn isn't edible due to 27...♗xb4? 28 ♕a4!) 28 ♕e2! when Black still cannot take a pawn. Carlsen gives 28...♗f7, but here 29 c5! (29 ♕e4 is Carlsen's suggestion, but just leads to just a draw) 29...♗c7 30 ♗g5! exchanges a pair of bishops and gives White very good winning chances.

27...♗g4!

Suddenly the threat of ...♖d1 and mate proves decisive.

28 b4 ♗e3! 29 h3 ♖d1 30 ♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 31 ♔h2 ♗f4+ 32 g3 ♖d2+ 33 ♕xd2 ♗xd2 34 hxg4 ♗xb4

Carlsen points out he could have won quicker with 34...c5! 35 bxc5 ♗g5 when the a-pawns are too fast, but Black is winning anyway.

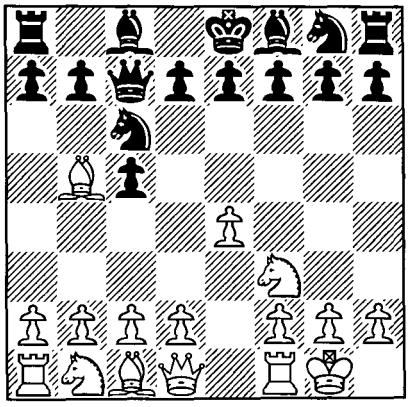
35 ♗xf6 a5 36 ♔g2 ♔d7 37 ♔f3 ♗d6 38 ♔e4 ♗xg3 39 ♔d3 ♔e6 40 ♗d4 a6 41 ♔c2 a4 42 ♔b1 ♗e5 43 ♗f2 ♔d6 44 ♔a2 ♗c3 45 ♔a3 ♔e5 46 ♔xa4 ♔f4 47 ♗b6 ♔xg4 48 ♗a5 ♗xa5 49 ♔xa5 ♔f4 50 ♔b6 a5 0-1

An unfortunate end, but White definitely had the better position for most of the game.

Game 54
F.Berkes-I.Hera
European Championship, Rijeka 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♕b6

Black attacks our bishop and at the same time prevents us from doubling his c-pawns. 3...♕c7 is a closely-linked idea and often the positions transpose after 4 0-0 and then:



a) 4...a6 5 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 6 d4 cxd4 7 ♘xd4 leaves the pawn definitely poisoned: 7...♕xe4? (7...♕c7 8 ♘c3 e6 transposes to our main game) 8 ♘c3 ♕g6 9 ♘d5 ♕d6 10 c4 gives White tremendous play for the pawn, as shown by the 10...e5 11 ♖e1 ♘e7 of S.Bednarek-M.Gawronski, Lodz 1997, when 12 ♕h5! exd4 13 ♗g5 wins immediately.

b) 4...e6 5 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 6 ♘c3 ♘f6 (6...a6 7 d4 would again transpose to Berkes-Hera) 7 ♖e1 d6 8 d4 ♗e7 9 e5 dxe5 was V.Baklan-J.Sprenger, Metz 2003, when the best looks to be 10 ♘xe5 ♕d6 11 ♗e3 cxd4 12 ♗xd4 ♕d8 13 ♕d3 0-0 14 ♖ad1 with strong pressure.

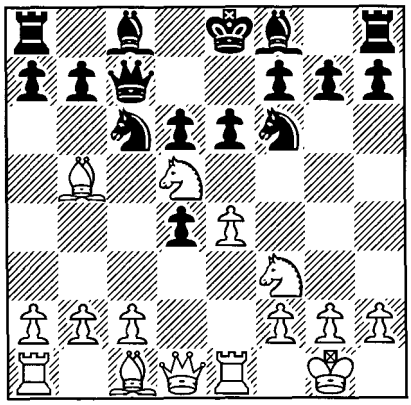
c) 4...♘f6 5 ♖e1 e6 6 ♘c3 with another branch:

c1) 6...a6?! 7 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♕c4 10 e5 ♘d5 11 ♘e4 is already a very dubious position for Black, E.Rozentalis-B.Sahl, Copenhagen 1988.

c2) 6...♘g4!? can be safely defused by 7 ♗xc6 bxc6 8 d3 (Kaufman) with a comfortable edge.

c3) 6...♘d4 7 e5! ♘xb5 8 ♘xb5 ♕b6 9 c4 a6 10 ♘c3 ♘g8 11 d4 cxd4 12 ♘xd4 left Black extremely passive in T.Bakre-M.Illingworth, Canberra 2007: 12...d6? 13 exd6 ♕xd6 14 ♘d5! ♕d8 15 ♗f4 ♗d6 16 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 17 ♘f5! ♕c5 18 b4 ♕c6 19 ♕g4 g6 20 ♕d4 f6 21 ♘xf6+ ♔f7 22 ♘xg8 and 1-0 was an extremely one sided affair.

c4) 6...d6 leaves us the option of playing safely with 7 ♗xc6+ ♕xc6 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♕d7 10 ♕f3, as suggested by Nunn. Alternatively we could play the more exciting 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♘d5! with a powerful initiative:



c41) 8...exd5 9 exd5+ ♗e7 10 ♘xd4

♘xd5 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♕xd5 ♗b7 13 ♗g5 0-0 (13...f6 14 ♗f4 cxb5 15 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 16 ♗xd6 is simply an extra pawn, J.Gazic-D.Plassmann, Paderborn 2006) 14 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 15 ♗xe7 cxd5 16 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 17 ♖d1 leaves Black in an extremely unpleasant endgame, which the young Frenchman converted with ease in M.Vachier Lagrave-Y.Gaffe, Nantes 2005.

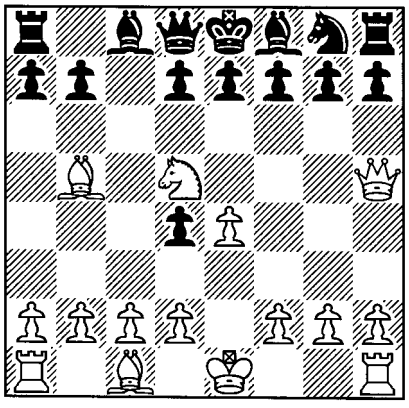
c42) 8...♕d8 9 ♘xd4 ♗d7 10 ♗g5 ♖c8 (10...exd5 11 ♘xc6! bxc6 12 exd5+ ♗e7 13 ♗xf6 gxf6 14 dxc6 is hopeless) 11 ♘f5! a6 12 ♗xc6 bxc6 13 ♘xf6+ gxf6 was seen in M.Ulibin-V.Akopian, Santiago de Chile 1990, when the easiest would have been 14 ♗h4! and Black has no way to defend d6.

d) 4...d6 5 ♘c3 e6 again provokes White to open up the centre with 6 d4 cxd4 7 ♘xd4 ♘f6 8 ♘d5! exd5 9 exd5 ♘xd5 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 ♕xd5 ♗b7 12 ♖e1+ ♗e7 13 ♗g5, which in fact transposes to variation 'c41'.

4 ♘c3 e6

The logical follow-up, taking the d5-square away from the knight. Others:

a) 4...♘d4? leaves Black far too behind in development and White once won a miniature after 5 ♘xd4 cxd4 6 ♘d5 ♕d8 7 ♕h5!.



Black's position is already difficult, but now 7...a6?! loses instantly: 8 ♕e5! f6 9 ♘c7+ ♔f7 10 ♕d5+ 1-0, I.Smirin-Y.Afek, Ramat Gan 1992.

b) 4...a6 5 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 6 d4 leaves White miles ahead in development, while the best thing Black can hope for is a transposition to the game.

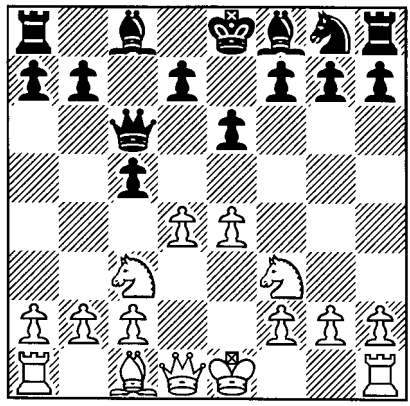
c) 4...g6 has also been played when 5 d4! is very strong: 5...cxd4 (or 5...♘xd4 6 ♘xd4 cxd4 7 ♘d5 ♕a5+ 8 b4 ♕d8 9 ♗f4 and although Black struggled on for another five moves in T.Vujcic-B.Sevelj, Split 2005, he really should have resigned at this point) 6 ♘d5 ♕d8 7 ♗f4 d6 8 ♕xd4 in J.Heiduczek-O.Epding, German League 1998, forced 8...f6 when White should of course be delighted with his opening.

5 ♗xc6

We capture the knight anyway, even though Black is able to recapture with the queen. This is because even though we do not gain a structural advantage, we are able to seize the initiative thanks to our large lead in development.

5 0-0 a6 6 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♘xd4 ♕c7 was the actual move order of the game, but this allows Black the added option of 5...♘ge7! which seems acceptable for him, as he will be able to recapture with the knight and so keep control over d4.

5...♕xc6 6 d4

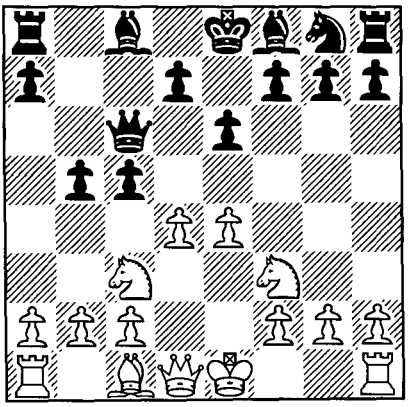


6...cxd4

This is the most usual response when the position resembles an Open Sicilian. White lacks his light-squared bishop, but is a long way ahead in development and Black has big problems on the dark squares. Alternatives are:

a) 6...♘f6 7 d5 starts to look like a Pseudo-Benoni: 7...exd5 8 exd5 ♕a6 9 ♗g5 (9 a4 followed by 10 ♘b5 also favours White) 9...♗e7 10 d6! ♕xd6 (or 10...♗xd6 11 ♗xf6 gxf6 12 ♕d2 and Black's king lacks a safe haven) 11 ♕xd6 ♗xd6 12 ♗xf6 gxf6 13 0-0-0 ♗e7 14 ♘d5 ♗d8 15 ♘d2 and despite his extra pawn Black didn't last long in J.Magem Badals-Z.Franco Ocampos, Leon 1990, which concluded 15...a5 16 ♖he1+ ♔f8 17 ♘e4 ♖a6 18 ♘e3 ♗e7 19 ♘f5 ♖e6 20 ♘xe7 ♖xe7 21 ♘d6 ♖xe1 22 ♖xe1 ♔g7 23 ♖e8! 1-0. A fitting final position, in which White's knight runs rings around Black's bishop.

b) 6...b5 is given as dubious by Palliser, but as far as I can see Black already seems to be in trouble!



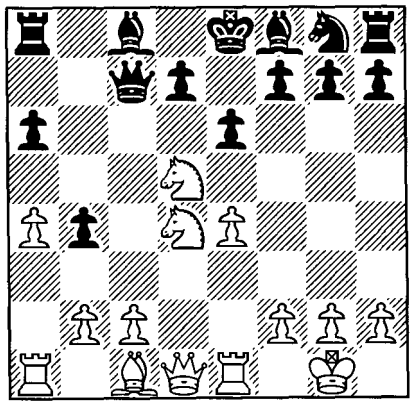
After 7 d5! ♕b7 8 0-0 b4 9 ♘a4 d6 10 c4!? (10 ♖e1 e5 11 b3 ♘f6 12 a3 also looks like a good start) if you were to guess, you'd definitely say this position had arisen from 1 d4. White has exchanged his light-squared bishop, so correctly places all his pawns on that colour square. Indeed, he has the better chances with his extra space and lead in development, as was confirmed following 10...e5 11 ♖e1 ♗g4 (Black's plan of trading his bishop is flawed as he loses too much time; he had to start developing his kingside) 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 g6 14 a3! b3 15 ♘c3 ♕d7 16 ♘b1 ♖b8 17 ♘d2 and the b-pawn dropped in I.Glek-O.Heinzel, Bad Zwesten 2002.

7 ♘xd4 ♕c7

7...♕c4, to prevent White castling, has been the other choice, although 8 ♘db5 a6 (8...♘f6 9 ♕d3! ♕xd3 10 cxd3 ♔d8 11 ♗e3 won a pawn by force in Aung Thant Zin-Wang Zili Kuala Lumpur 1993, as 11...b6 12 ♘xa7! ♖xa7? 13 ♗xb6+ ♖c7 14 ♘b5 is just terrible for Black) 9 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 10 ♕xd6 ♘e7 11 ♗e3 ♕c6 12 ♗c5 left Black acutely vulnerable on the dark squares in T.Hillarp Persson-B.Kurajica, Guernsey 2009.

8 0-0 a6 9 ♖e1 d6

9...b5 has been tried a few times, but is extremely risky with Black so far behind on development. After 10 a4 b4 11 ♘d5! White has an extremely dangerous attack.



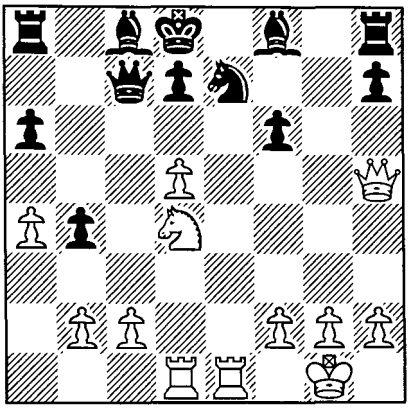
After 11...exd5 12 exd5+ Black can try:

a) 12...♔d8 allows the pretty combination 13 ♗g5+! f6 14 ♘c6+! dxc6 15 dxc6+

♗d6 (15...♗d7 16 cxd7 ♘e7 17 ♕h5! g6 18 ♕f3 ♕c6 19 ♕xc6 ♘xc6 20 ♗xf6+ picks up material) 16 ♗f4 ♕xc6 17 ♗xd6 ♗d7 18 ♗xb4 a5 19 ♗f8 and White's attack is far too strong.

b) 12...♗e7 13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♘f5 d6 15 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 (15...♔d8 16 ♕h5 ♗d7 17 ♗e3, as given by Wei Ming, again leaves White's attack far too strong: Black cannot develop his kingside pieces and thus in practice is material down, while his king is stuck in the centre, which adds up to more than enough compensation) 16 ♘e6+ ♗xe6 17 dxe6 fxg5 18 ♕f3+ (Wei Ming) is extremely strong.

c) 12...♘e7 13 ♗g5! f6 was tried in Goh Wei Ming-Teo Weixing, Singapore 2005, when I think the most accurate would have been 14 ♗xf6! gxf6 15 ♕h5+ ♔d8 16 ♖ad1!.

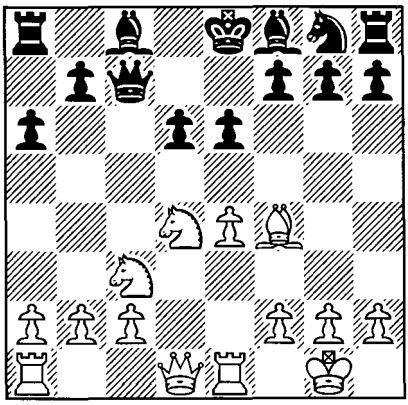


Black is two bishops up but amazingly there doesn't appear to be a good defence to White's threat of 17 ♘e6+:

c1) 16...♘g6 would actually transpose back to the game which Wei Ming finished beautifully with 17 ♘c6+! dxc6 18 dxc6+ ♗d6 19 ♖xd6+! ♕xd6 20 ♕a5+ ♕c7 21 ♖d1+.

c2) 16...♕b6 is a better try, but after 17 ♕f7 ♗b7 (17...d6 18 ♖xe7! ♗xe7 19 ♖e1 ♖a7 20 ♘c6+ forces Black to give up his queen to parry the mate threats) 18 d6! White will quickly regain his sacrificed material whilst keeping a strong attack.

10 ♗f4!



This is a rare move, but looks very promising. White puts pressure on d6 and has ideas to play e4-e5. Instead 10 ♗g5 has been the main move, with a consensus that White has a small edge, since Black does not really want to exchange the dark-squared bishops as then d6 will become yet more vulnerable.

10...e5

This is obviously not what Black wants to play, as the d5-square is going to be a big problem for the rest of the game. Thus he might prefer:

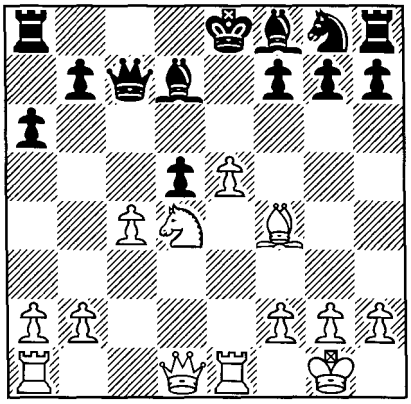
a) 10...♗e7 looks the most logical to me, but then 11 e5 d5 12 ♕f3 leaves Black with problems, both developing his kingside knight and dealing with the threat of 13 ♘xd5!

b) 10...♗d7 was played in the only previous game to reach this point. White continued 11 e5 and then:

b1) 11...0-0-0 12 ♕h5 (12 ♕f3 is also very strong) 12...♗e8 13 exd6 ♗xd6 14 ♗xd6 ♖xd6?! (14...♕xd6 15 ♖ad1 is unpleasant, but at least this way Black doesn't lose any material instantly) 15 ♘xe6! was a strong blow in M.Panelo Munoz-P.Raineri de Luca,

Barcelona 2001.

b2) 11...d5 must be critical when I had great fun analysing 12 ♘xd5!? (12 ♘f5 is an alternative, but the position is roughly level following 12...♕c4 – 12...exf5? 13 ♘xd5! ♕c6 14 ♘c7+! ♕xc7 15 e6 crashes through – 13 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 14 exd6 ♕xf4 15 ♘xd5 ♕xd6 16 ♘f6+ ♔e7 17 ♕xd6+ ♔xd6 18 ♖ad1+ ♔c7 19 ♘xd7) 12...exd5 13 c4! (the immediate 13 e6?! ♕xf4 14 exd7+ ♔xd7 doesn't seem to get anywhere), and Black's position is extremely dangerous. I've added a few lines of my analysis to indicate the problems Black might have:



b21) 13...dxc4?! 14 e6 ♕xf4 15 exd7+ ♔xd7 16 ♘e6+ ♕d6 17 ♕f3 fxe6 18 ♕xb7+ looks very promising.

b22) 13...♘e7 14 e6 ♕xf4 15 exd7+ ♔xd7 16 ♕a4+ ♔c7 17 cxd5 with a huge initiative.

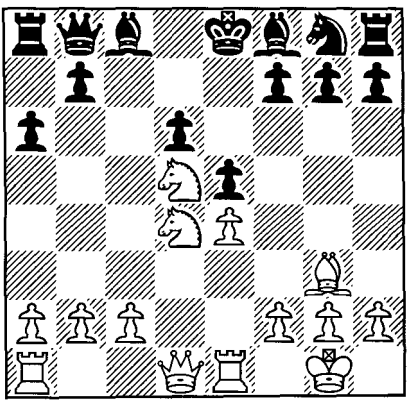
b23) 13...♗b4 is the computer's top choice after being left on for a long time. Then 14 e6 ♕xf4 15 exd7+ ♔xd7 16 ♕a4+ b5 17 ♕xb4 ♕xd4 18 ♖ad1 (18 b3!?) 18...♕xc4 19 ♕a3 leaves Black a piece up, but with ongoing problems with his king. Note that 19...♖e8 fails to 20 ♖xe8 ♔xe8 21 ♖e1+ ♔d7 22 ♕f8! when Black will swiftly lose back all his extra material.

b24) 13...♗e6 doesn't solve Black's problems but as we've seen, the alternatives don't seem any better: 14 cxd5 ♗xd5 15 e6! ♕xf4 16 exf7+ ♔d7 (16...♔xf7 17 ♕h5+ wins instantly) 17 fxg8♕ ♖xg8 (or 17...♗xg8 18 ♖c1!, trapping the king in the centre of the board, and then 18...♗d6 19 g3 ♕g5 20 ♕a4+ b5 21 ♘xb5! ♕xb5 22 ♕g4+ ♔d8 23 ♕xg7 wins the rook for starters) 18 g3 ♕f6 19 ♖c1! ♗e7 20 ♕a4+ b5 21 ♘xb5 axb5 22 ♕xb5+ ♗c6 23 ♖xc6 ♕xc6 24 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 25 ♕xc6 leaves White in a trivially winning endgame.

11 ♘d5 ♕b8

11...♕d8 was Wei Ming's recommendation, but it doesn't change the game much as following 12 ♗e3 it's far too risky to take the knight: 12...exd4?! 13 ♗xd4 and as Vigorito observes, Black cannot parry the threat of 14 ♗b6.

12 ♗g3



12...♘e7

This leaves Black in a really ugly middlegame with no prospects. However, taking the knight looks suicidal: 12...exd4 13 e5! ♗e6 14 exd6 (Vigorito's 14 ♕xd4, leaving Black in a complete bind, is also very strong, but the text is more forcing) 14...♗xd6 15 ♕g4! ♔f8 16 ♖xe6! and now 16...♗xg3 (16...fxe6 17 ♕xe6 ♗xg3 18 fxg3 ♕e8 19 ♕d6+ ♔f7 20 ♖f1+ ♘f6 21 ♖xf6+ gxf6 22

♕xf6+ ♔g8 23 ♘e7+ ♕xe7 24 ♕xe7 leaves White's queen the dominant factor) 17 fxg3 ♕c8 is a tricky try to survive. However, after 18 ♖ae1! the rook is still poisoned: 18...fxe6 (18...♘f6 19 ♘xf6 fxe6 20 ♘h5 ♕d7 21 ♘xg7 ♕xg7 22 ♖f1+ ♕f7 23 ♕xe6 is decisive) 19 ♘f4! ♘f6 20 ♘xe6+ ♔e7 21 ♕xg7+ ♔d6 22 ♕xf6 leaves material equality, but Black is getting mated very shortly.

13 ♘b6! ♖a7

Black still cannot take the knight: 13...exd4? 14 e5! and White crashes through.

14 c4 ♕c7

Again 14...exd4? 15 e5! wins.

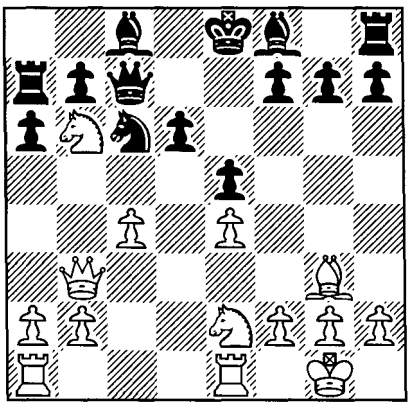
15 ♕b3

15 ♕a4+ ♗d7 16 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 17 ♘b5 ♘c8 18 ♘c7+ ♔d8 19 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 20 ♘d5 ♘e7 21 ♘c3 was an alternative, leaving Black in a horrible-looking queenless endgame, but Berkes chooses to keep the queens on.

15...♘c6

15...exd4 16 e5 d5 17 e6! is still winning!

16 ♘e2

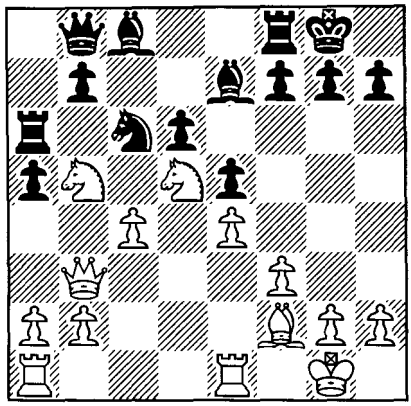


So the dust from the opening excitement has settled somewhat and it's easy to see that White has a huge advantage. The d5- and b6-squares are major weaknesses in Black's structure. Meanwhile the rook on a7 cannot move and the bishop on f8 lacks any prospects whatsoever.

16...♗e7 17 f3

17 f4!? was possible too, but Berkes chooses to leave Hera in the massive bind until he's ready. There's nothing Black can do but wait.

17...a5 18 ♗f2 ♖a6 19 ♘c3 0-0 20 ♘b5 ♕b8 21 ♘d5



Look at those knights!

21...♗d8 22 ♖ed1

22 c5! instantly gave White a decisive advantage: 22...dxc5 23 ♗xc5 ♖e8 24 ♗d6 ♕a8 25 ♕e3! and the exchange drops.

22...♘e7 23 ♘dc3 ♗e6 24 ♕a4 ♘c8 25 b3

Black is being suffocated, so desperately tries a kingside lunge.

25...h5 26 ♖d3

Slowly increasing the pressure.

26...♗b6 27 ♖ad1 ♗xf2+ 28 ♔xf2 ♖d8 29 c5! ♖c6

What else? After 29...♖d7 30 ♕a3 the d-pawn drops.

30 ♕xa5 b6 31 cxb6 ♖xb6?

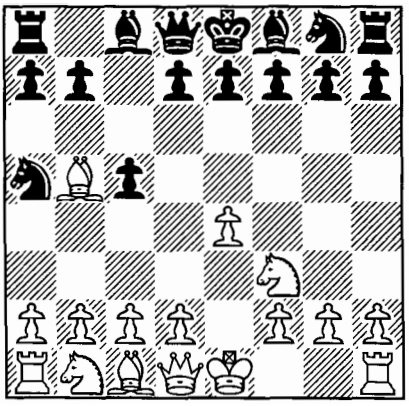
This loses immediately, but I imagine Hera was sick of staring at this position from the black side.

After 31...♖d7 32 ♘a4 ♘xb6 33 ♘xb6 ♖xb6 34 a4 White's queenside pawns should finish the job.

32 ♘a4 1-0

Game 55
N.Delgado Ramirez–
G.Carreto Nieto
Aguascalientes 2008

1 ♘f3 c5 2 e4 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘a5!?



A very strange-looking move, but not such a bad one. Black doesn't allow us to trade on c6 and has ideas of ....c5-c4, trapping our bishop. However, playing such an early ...♘a5 is rather committal. Black should really have a large knowledge of different Open Sicilian themes, as White can open the position if he wishes when Black will have to work out which variation would favour his knight on a5 at such an early point.

4 c3

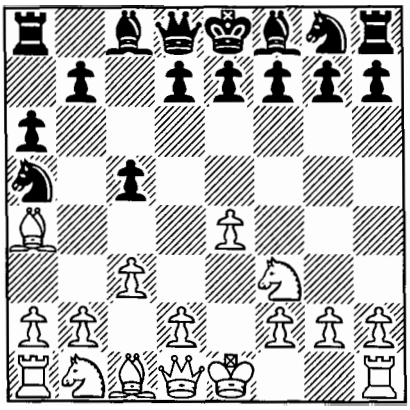
Preparing a big centre. Playing a c3 Sicilian type position makes sense as Black rarely plays ...♘a5 there.

4 0-0 is of course reasonable too if you're happy going into an Open Sicilian-type position and was the choice of Gashimov. After 4...a6 5 ♗e2 b5?! (I think this is premature; 5...e6 should be preferred) 6 a4 b4 7 d4 cxd4 in V.Gashimov-O.Vea, Gibraltar 2009, 8 ♕xd4 would have exploited the position of Black's knight.

4...a6

Black should force White to choose which diagonal his bishop wants to live on. Instead 4...♘f6 5 e5 ♘d5 6 d4 cxd4 7 0-0 e6 8 cxd4 a6 9 ♗d3! allowed the bishop to immediately take its place on the b1-h7 diagonal. Already following 9...b5 10 ♘g5 ♗e7 11 ♕h5 ♗xg5 12 ♗xg5 ♕b6 13 ♗e3 d6 14 ♘c3 ♘xc3 15 bxc3 ♕c6 16 ♕g5! White had great attacking chances in V.Nevednichy-M.Quinn, Bled Olympiad 2002.

5 ♗a4



White plays as in a Ruy Lopez. We allow Black ...b7-b5 with tempo, but our bishop is going to the strong c2-square.

5 ♗e2 is also a reasonable option when White will probably have a good version of the c3 Sicilian after 5...♘f6 6 e5 ♘d5 7 d4 cxd4 8 0-0 e6 9 cxd4, but I'd recommend that you should have experience of playing the c3 Sicilian before taking on this position.

5...b5

Alternatively:

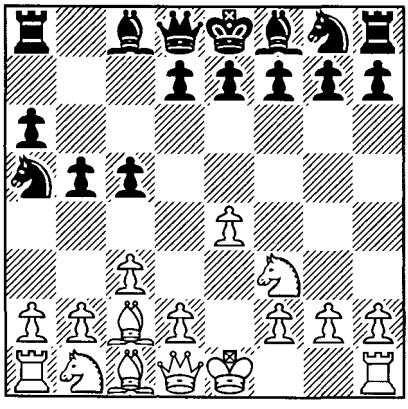
a) 5...e6 doesn't have much independent significance, as Black will hardly be able to develop his pieces without playing ...b7-b5.

b) 5...c4?! has been played, preventing us from creating a strong centre, but looks rather dubious to me. This is because Black

loses further time when he should be developing, while White can easily undermine the c4-pawn with b2-b3. Here 6 0-0 b5 7 ♗c2 ♗b7 has been tried by a couple of grandmasters, but after 8 b4! ♘c6 (8...cxb3 9 axb3 is a great position for White who will be able to occupy the centre freely and play along the a-file) 9 a4 Black has problems keeping his queenside pawns: for example, 9...e6 10 axb5 axb5 11 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 12 ♘a3 ♗a6 13 d3! cxd3 14 ♗xd3 ♕b7 15 ♕e2 and the b5-pawn will drop.

c) 5...♘f6 reaches independent positions, but they are rather promising for White: 6 e5 ♘d5 7 d4 cxd4 (7...e6? 8 dxc5! was simply an extra pawn in Y.Gonzalez Vidal-R.Mateo, Santa Clara 2003) 8 ♕xd4!? (I like this way of recapturing if you don't want a typical c3 Sicilian position) 8...e6 9 0-0 b5 10 ♗c2 ♘c6 11 ♕g4 and White's pieces were well situated to start a kingside attack. M.Novikov-A.Gusev, Tula 2002, continued 11...♕c7 12 ♖e1 ♗b7 13 ♗g5 h6 when 14 ♗h4 g5 15 ♗g3 would have given White a good game as Black has a lot of holes in his position.

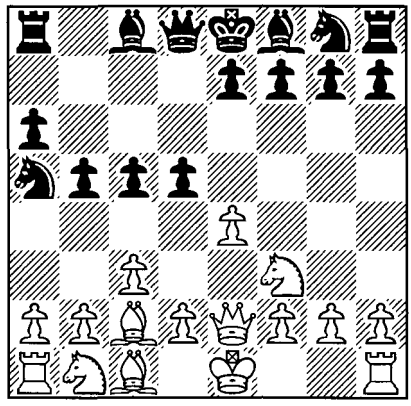
6 ♗c2



6...e6

Again Black might deviate, especially with option 'c':

a) 6...d5?! is an aggressive attempt, but looks rather dubious strategically after 7 ♕e2!? (7 d4 dxe4 8 ♗xe4 ♗b7 9 ♗xb7 ♘xb7 10 0-0 ♘f6 would actually transpose to variation 'a3'), and then:



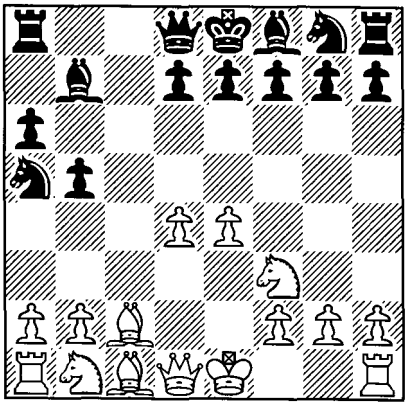
a1) 7...d4 8 e5! ♗b7 9 ♗e4 and White has a long-term plan of surrounding (and capturing) the d4-pawn.

a2) 7...♗b7 8 e5 e6 9 d4 looks like a promising French Defence-type structure as Black's b7-bishop and a5-knight aren't able to compete on the kingside.

a3) After 7...dxe4 8 ♗xe4 ♗b7 9 ♗xb7 ♘xb7 10 0-0 ♘f6 11 d4 e6 12 ♖d1 c4 Black's queenside pawns may look powerful, but White can fight against them: 13 b3! ♕d5 14 a4! (successfully undermining Black's pawns) 14...♖c8 15 axb5 axb5 16 bxc4 bxc4 17 ♘e5 ♗d6 18 ♘d2 ♘a5 19 ♖xa5! ♕xa5 20 ♘dxc4 ♕a6? was R.Rabiega-F.Hegeler, German League 2000, when Palliser points out White could have won immediately with 21 ♘xf7!.

b) After 6...d6 7 0-0 e5?! the position feels like a Chigorin Ruy Lopez, but Black has forgotten to develop his kingside and after 8 d4! ♕c7 in F.Osmanovic-S.Manojlovic, Senta 2010, White should have thrown in 9 a4! b4 before playing 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♕d5! ♘c6 12 ♘xe5!, picking up a pawn.

c) The main line runs 6...♗b7 7 d4 (it's also possible to delay the central advance with 7 0-0 ♘f6 8 ♖e1 e6 9 d4 cxd4 when Steffen Pedersen suggests the interesting 10 ♘xd4!? which after 10...♗e7 11 e5 ♘d5 12 ♕g4 g6 13 ♗h6 ♕c7 14 ♘d2 reached a promising position in A.Kobelev-A.Fominyh, Perm 1997) 7...cxd4 8 cxd4 and now:

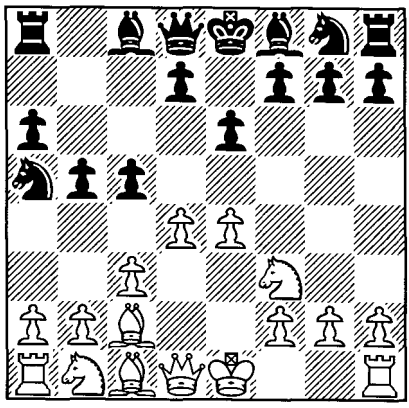


c1) After 8...♖c8!? 9 0-0 ♘f6 White should probably transpose back to variation 'c2' with 10 ♘bd2.

c2) 8...♘f6 9 ♘bd2 ♖c8 10 0-0 d5? (far too aggressive; 10...e6 should be preferred) 11 e5 ♘e4 12 e6! f6 13 ♖e1 ♘xd2 and in E.Bakhmatov-A.Chapman, Griesheim 2000, White could have finished off the game in picturesque fashion with 14 ♘e5! ♖xc2 15 ♕h5+ g6 16 ♘xg6.

c3) 8...e6 is Black's main choice and after the 9 0-0 ♘f6 (or 9...♗e7, as in C.Marzolo-T.Coste, St Chely d'Aubrac 2003, when I like 10 e5!, preventing Black's knight from developing) 10 ♘bd2 ♗e7 11 e5 ♘d5 12 ♘e4 h6 13 a3 ♕b6 14 ♘c5! ♗c6 of M.Ulibin-O.Vea, Donostia 2010, 15 ♖e1 ♘b7 16 b4 leaves White with a pleasant advantage. The knight on c5 blocks any queenside counterplay for Black, while White can start attacking on the kingside, perhaps after ♘f3-d2 and ♕d1-g4.

7 d4



An interesting position has been reached. Black has been able to kick-start some queenside play, but we have our bishop on a strong diagonal, staring down at Black's kingside. It's actually useful that the knight is on a5 rather than c6 so we don't have to worry about ...♘c6-b4, harassing our bishop. Moreover, we have created a strong pawn centre and our king will reach safety long before Black's. This means it will be possible to start a quick attack.

7...♗b7?!

Black does not want to allow White's knight access to c3, but this has a tactical flaw. 7...cxd4 has been the main move when 8 cxd4 ♗b7 transposes to variation 'c3', above.

8 0-0?!

Giving Black the option to go back to the main line, but 8 dxc5! would have picked up a pawn, due to the b2-b4 fork, when Black will struggle for any counterplay: 8...♘f6 9 ♕e2 ♘c6 10 b4 a5 11 ♗d2 axb4 12 cxb4 d6 and now giving back the pawn with 13 e5! (not 13 cxd6 ♗xd6 14 e5? because 14...♗xe5 15 ♘xe5? ♘d4 is extremely dangerous) 13...dxe5 14 ♘c3! gives White a great position.

8...b4

Carreto Nieto refuses to go into the main line, but this is very risky.

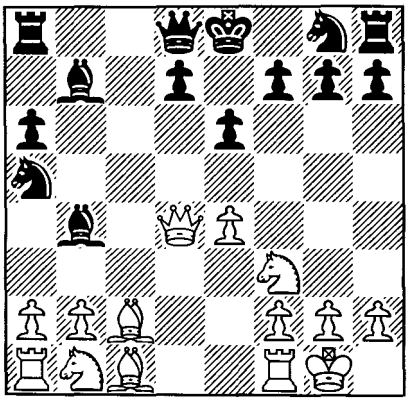
9 dxc5!

Delgado Ramirez finds it a move late. It is no longer winning material, but Black will still suffer.

9...♗xc5

Or 9...bxc3 10 b4! ♘c6 11 a3 and the c3-pawn will fall.

10 cxb4 ♗xb4 11 ♕d4



11...♗f8

Forced as it's the only way of dealing with both threats. Now White has a useful lead in development and can use that to drum up an initiative.

12 ♗g5!?

Provoking ...f6. Of course White could play normally with 12 ♘c3 when the game might continue 12...♘c6 13 ♕d1 ♕c7 14 ♗e3 ♘f6 15 ♕d2 ♗e7 16 ♗f4 d6 17 ♖ac1 0-0 18 ♘d5! exd5 19 exd5 ♘xd5 20 ♕xd5 ♘e5 21 ♕xe5 dxe5 22 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 23 ♖xc7 ♗xf3 24 ♖xe7 ♗xg2 25 ♔xg2 exf4 26 ♖c1, leaving us with a very promising endgame.

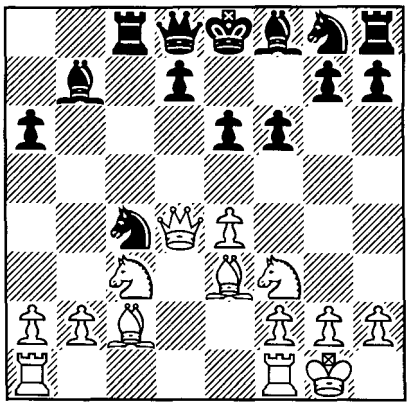
12...f6

Black takes the grandmaster at his word. However, 12...♘f6 may also be possible as Black gets counterplay down the g-file: 13 e5 (13 ♘c3 is of course safer and leaves White a little better) 13...♗xf3 14 exf6 ♖c8 15 ♗d3 (of course not 15 fxg7?? ♕xg5 16 gxh8♕ ♕xg2 mate) 15...gxf6! 16 ♗xf6 ♖g8 17 g3 ♖g4 18 ♕xg4 ♕xf6 19 ♕f4 ♕xf4 20 gxf4 ♗h6 21 ♘d2 ♗d5 22 ♗e4 ♗xe4 23 ♘xe4 ♗xf4 and White is better with his extra material, although Black has good drawing chances.

13 ♗e3 ♖c8 14 ♘c3

Natural, but I think White should avoid Black's next note. 14 ♕d3! ♘c4 15 ♗d4 would have kept the dark-squared bishop on the board and thus White would still have a comfortable edge.

14...♘c4



Black is delighted to be able to exploit the fact that his knight is on a5, but I don't think this was strongest. Instead 14...♗c5! 15 ♕d3 ♗xe3 16 ♕xe3 (16 fxe3!? is a more aggressive option when 16...♘h6 17 ♗a4 ♘f7 18 ♖fd1 ♘c6 19 ♖ac1 is unclear, but I doubt Black should have too many problems) 16...♘c4 17 ♕a7 ♕b6 18 ♕xb6 ♘xb6 looks reasonable for Black.

15 ♗b3

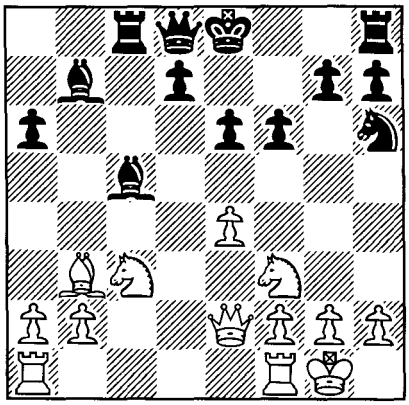
White starts to drift. 15 ♗a4! looks to keep the advantage following 15...♘xb2 16 ♖ab1! and then:

a) 16...♘xa4 17 ♕xa4 ♕c7 18 ♘d4! grants White a very dangerous initiative: for example, 18...e5 19 ♘e6 ♕c6 20 ♘xf8

♕xa4 21 ♘xa4 ♗xe4 22 ♘xd7 ♗xb1 23 ♖xb1 ♖c2 (23...♔xd7? 24 ♘b6+ wins the whole rook) 24 ♘ac5 leaves White clearly better.

b) 16...♗a3 17 ♗b3 ♕c7 18 ♘e2 and Black's knight is trapped, allowing White to pick up two pieces for the rook and 18...e5 19 ♕d2 ♗xe4 20 ♖xb2 ♗xb2 21 ♕xb2 ♗xf3 22 gxf3 certainly favours him. A rook and two pawns is nominally about the same as the two bishops, but Black's king is stuck in the centre, meaning White has very promising attacking chances.

15...♘xe3 16 ♕xe3 ♗c5 17 ♕e2 ♘h6



Black shouldn't really have any problems now, as he can develop fairly freely while he has the trump of the bishop-pair in this open position. White still has enough play to keep rough equality, but probably no more.

18 ♖ad1 ♕c7 19 ♗a4

This move isn't very useful as Black can defend easily. Instead 19 ♖d2 0-0 20 ♖fd1 ♖f7 21 h3 would keep some pressure on Black's position.

19...♖d8 20 ♖c1

It would still make sense to keep pressure on the d-file. 20 ♖d2 0-0 21 ♖fd1 ♗c8! is around level, but not 21...♖f7 22 ♘d4! when White has some initiative.

20...0-0 21 a3 ♕f4 22 ♕c4?!

Delgado Ramirez was definitely not on top form in this game. He should have taken the opportunity to force the queen to retreat with 22 g3 ♕b8 23 ♖fd1, reaching a roughly level position, although it's easier for Black to play.

22...♗a7

22...♖c8! would have forced the queen to retreat: 23 ♕d3 (23 ♕e2 is safer) 23...♘g4! 24 ♖cd1 f5 gives Black a strong attack.

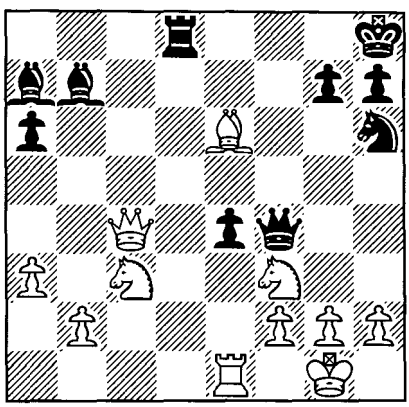
23 ♖cd1 f5?!

After playing well, Black errs. 23...♗c8 looks passive, but would be fine for him, and 23...♖f7 was also possible.

24 ♗xd7 fxe4

24...♔h8! was more interesting when the long line 25 ♗xe6 ♖xd1 26 ♖xd1 ♗xf2+! 27 ♔xf2 ♘g4+ 28 ♔e1 ♘e3 29 ♘e2! ♕xe4 30 ♕b3 ♘xd1 31 ♔xd1 is a little better for White, but a lot messier than the game.

25 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 26 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 27 ♖e1



27...♕f6?!

After this Black drops out of the fight. It was necessary to try 27...♘g4 28 ♘xe4 (certainly not 28 ♗xg4? ♗xf2+! as White's queen is no longer defended) 28...♘e5 29 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 30 ♗g4 ♕xb2 31 ♕b4 (31 ♕f7 ♗xe4 32 ♕xa7 ♕xa3 is also slightly better

for White) 31...♕xb4 32 axb4 ♖e8 33 ♗f3 and Black has good drawing chances.

28 ♘xe4 ♕xb2 29 ♘fg5

29 ♕b4! was simplest, leaving White a pawn up in the ending.

29...♖f8 30 ♖f1 ♕e5?!

30...♕xa3 31 ♕c2! looks dangerous, but it seems Black can survive with 31...♕e7, although White still has a decent initiative after 32 h4.

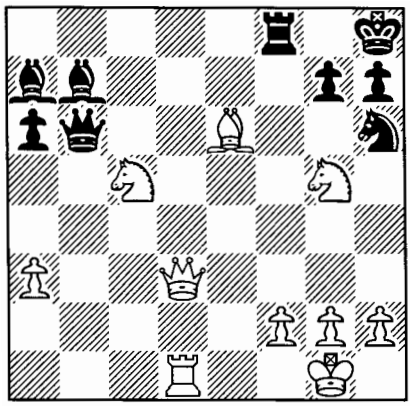
31 ♕b4 ♖b8 32 ♕d6 ♕a5 33 ♖d1 ♕b6 34 ♕d3!?

34 ♕f4, with the idea of 35 ♘d6 and 36 ♘gf7+, was the smoothest path to victory.

34...♖f8??

Black overlooks White's idea. 34...♕d4 had to be tried, exploiting the back-rank possibilities to swap queens, although 35 ♕xd4 ♗xd4 36 ♖xd4 ♗xe4 37 h3 is a pretty easy technical win.

35 ♘c5! 1-0

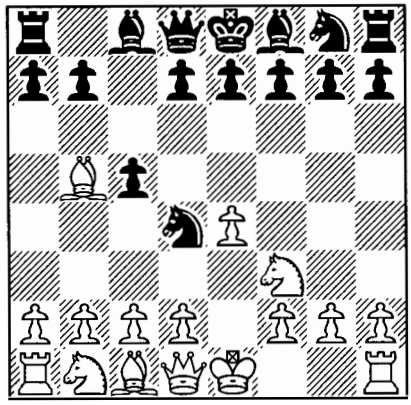


There's no real way to avert mate.

Game 56
G.Sax-F.Ljubicic
Split 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘d4

This move only really makes sense if there's already a knight on c3 when Black would gain some time. The position will now resemble a very good version of the Grand Prix Attack as White has not lost any time with his b1-knight.



4 ♘xd4 cxd4

The d4-pawn can be viewed as both a strength and a weakness. On the positive side, it is an extra central pawn and controls the c3-square, preventing White's knight from joining in. However, it can be easily undermined by c2-c3 which will leave White with a big centre. It has also cost Black some time and he'll have to be careful to get his king to safety.

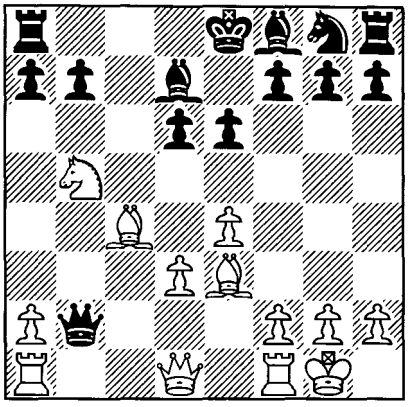
5 0-0

In this position 5 c3 is a good alternative and is the recommendation of Richard Palliser.

5...g6

The most logical follow-up. Black will fianchetto his bishop to support his d4-pawn. It's very easy for Black to stand significantly worse after just a few moves here, as we can see from:

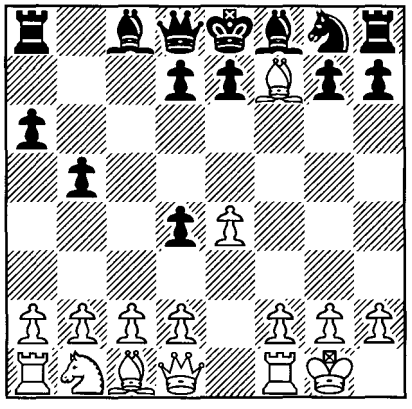
a) 5...♕b6 6 ♗c4 e6 7 d3 d6 8 c3 dxc3 9 ♘xc3 ♗d7 10 ♗e3! ♕xb2?! (a very dangerous pawn to grab, but White was already clearly better) 11 ♘b5! already generates some powerful threats.



Here Black felt obliged to sacrifice his queen, but after 11...♕xb5 (11...♖c8 is no better: 12 ♘xa7 ♖a8 13 ♖b1 ♕e5 14 ♖xb7 and White's a pawn up while Black won't get his king to safety in time) 12 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 13 ♕b3 ♗c6 14 ♖fc1 White converted without too much drama in L.Guliev-R.Oney, Agana 2007.

b) 5...a6 has been a common response when Shirov responded with 6 ♗c4:

b1) His opponent tries to gain more space on the queenside with 6...b5?!, but was surprised by the tactic 7 ♗xf7+! (7 ♗b3 e6 would transpose to the next note).



After 7...♔xf7 8 ♕h5+ g6 9 ♕d5+ e6 10 ♕xa8 White won the exchange and a pawn. Of course he has to be careful not to get his queen trapped, though, and after the 10...♕c7 of A.Shirov-Miorca, Internet (simul) 2000, 11 d3 appears to be the most accurate, with the idea of 11...♗b7 (11...♗d6 12 ♗g5 ♗b7 13 ♕d8 lets the queen escape with a winning position) 12 ♗f4!, deflecting the black queen.

b2) 6...e6 would prevent White's idea, but 7 d3 b5 8 ♗b3 ♗b7 9 f4!? (I'm used to playing these positions from the Grand Prix Attack and here I think White has a good version as he has retained his light-squared bishop pointing down towards Black's vulnerable f7-square) 9...d5 10 f5! e5 (Z.Basagic-I.Miladinovic, Ohrid 2001) 11 exd5! ♗xd5 (11...♘f6 12 ♖e1 ♕c7 13 ♕f3 0-0-0 14 ♗g5 ♖xd5! 15 ♘d2 still leaves White with the upper hand) 12 ♖e1 ♕d6 13 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 14 c4! leaves Black's e5-pawn and king very vulnerable.

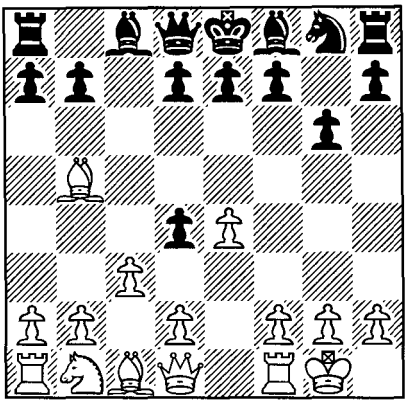
c) 5...e6 is a sensible move when 6 c3 is the most logical response: 6...♗c5 7 b4 (putting more pressure on the pawn with 7 ♕a4!? also looks promising) 7...♗b6 8 ♗b2 ♕h4 9 c4!? (this temporary pawn sacrifice looks strong, although 9 ♗d3 dxc3 10 ♘xc3 ♘f6 11 h3 also favours White) 9...♕xe4 10 c5 ♗c7 11 ♖e1 ♕d5 12 ♘a3 ♘f6 was Z.Izoria-J.Bonin, New York 2006, and here 13 ♗c4 ♕g5 14 ♘b5 ♗b8 15 ♘xd4 leaves White with a decent space advantage.

d) Meanwhile 5...e5?! defends the d4-pawn, but gives 6 c3 greater strength now there's the big hole on d5: 6...dxc3 7 ♘xc3 ♘f6 8 d4 exd4 was M.Novikov-A.Bakutin, Tula 2005, when 9 ♕xd4 is easily winning as 9...a6 10 e5 axb5 11 exf6 ♕xf6 12 ♖e1+ ♔d8 13 ♗g5! ♕xg5 14 ♕b6 is mate.

e) 5...♘f6 has also been tried, but it's dangerous: 6 e5 ♘d5 7 c3 ♕b6 8 ♗c4 ♘c7 9 b3 e6 10 ♗b2 d5 11 ♗d3 dxc3 12 ♘xc3 ♗d7 13 ♕g4! (preventing Black from developing his kingside) 13...0-0-0 14 ♖fc1 f5?! (Black

tries for counterplay, but this loses quickly) 15 exf6 gxf6 16 ♘a4 ♗xa4 17 ♗xf6! ♗a3 18 ♕xa4 ♗xc1 19 ♖xc1 ♖hf8 20 ♗d4 ♕d6 21 ♕xa7 ♖f7 22 ♗b5! and 1-0 was S.Lputian-T.Sloan, Chicago 1994.

6 c3!

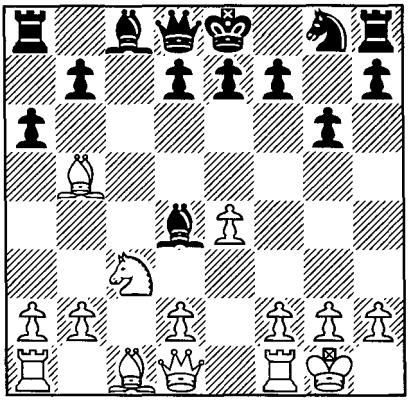


Immediately putting pressure on the d4-pawn. Black does not want to play 6...dxc3 when White would be left with a large centre and a lead in development, so instead he tries defending the pawn.

6...♗g7

6...dxc3 7 ♘xc3 ♗g7 8 d4 a6 9 ♗e2 would leave White with everything he could want from the opening: more space, a big centre and a lead in development.

7 cxd4 ♗xd4 8 ♘c3 a6



9 ♗a4

A natural retreat. However, 9 ♕a4! looks like a strong dynamic approach: 9...♕b6 (Black must keep possession of the d4-square; 9...♗g7 10 d4 is already very pleasant for White and following the 10...♖b8?! of R.Heischmann-K.Schmitt, Bad Wiessee 1997, White actually has an immediate win with 11 ♗f4! axb5 12 ♕a7!, winning the rook) 10 ♘d5 ♕c5 11 ♗e2 and now I think Black is obliged to play 11...♔f8 (11...♘f6 12 ♘c7+! ♕xc7 13 ♕xd4 can't be good for Black, while 11...♗g7 12 d4! ♗xd4 13 ♗f4 leaves White with a decisive initiative) 12 d3 and White has a pleasant edge as all of Black's pieces are rather clumsily placed and he's forfeited the right to castle.

9...e6

9...b5 10 ♗b3 ♗b7 11 d3 wouldn't be much different from the game.

10 d3

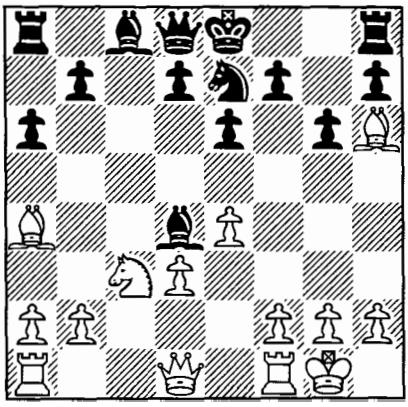
Sax is content to simply develop his pieces and to stop Ljubicic developing his! White can also take a big centre with 10 ♘e2 ♗g7 11 d4 b5 12 ♗c2 ♘e7 13 ♗e3 ♗b7 14 ♕d2 which was a little better for White in R.Ovetchkin-K.Vorobev, Soukhumi 2007, although Black had at least succeeded in completing his development.

10...♘e7

This leaves Black with problems ever getting his king to safety, but after 10...♗g7 11 d4 ♘e7 12 d5 Black starts to be squashed.

However, 10...b5 11 ♗b3 ♗b7 might be the best try for Black, delaying any movement on the kingside: 12 ♗f4 (12 ♔h1!? is an alternative waiting move) 12...♘e7 (12...b4?! 13 ♘a4 would simply give us a target on b4) 13 ♕d2 (if 13 ♗h6 and Black would at least have gained a tempo) 13...0-0 14 a4 and White has a slight edge.

11 ♗h6!



Cutting the king off in the centre of the board.

11...b5 12 ♗b3 ♘c6 13 ♕d2 ♕b6 14 ♔h1

14 a4!? would be an alternative, trying to prevent Black from castling long too: 14...♗b7 (14...b4 15 ♘e2 ♗e5 16 ♗e3 ♕b8 17 f4 looks rather pleasant) 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♖xa8+ ♗xa8 17 ♘e2 and Black's king will be stuck in the centre, promising us a comfortable game.

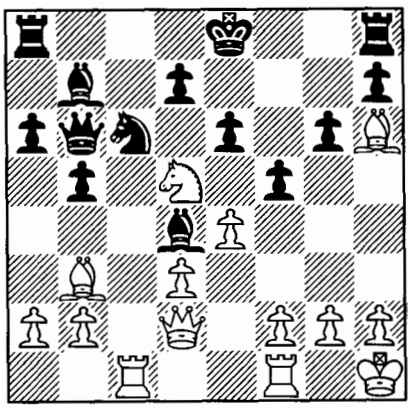
14...♗b7 15 ♖ac1

Dissuading Black from castling queenside and preparing a strong sacrifice.

15...f5

15...0-0-0?! 16 ♘e2 ♗f6 17 d4 would be terrible for Black.

16 ♘d5!



Sacrificing the knight to open up Black's king.

16...exd5 17 exd5 0-0-0

Ljubicic decides the safest method is to give back the knight immediately.

Instead 17...♘e5 18 ♖fe1 d6 19 f4 would also win back the piece, while 17...♘e7? looks natural, but is in fact Black's worst option as he has no good counter to 18 ♖fe1!: for example, 18...♖c8 (18...♔d8 19 ♕b4 d6 20 ♖xe7! ♔xe7 21 ♕e1+ ♗e5 22 ♗e3! ♕d8 23 ♗g5+ surprisingly wins the queen) 19 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 20 ♗g5 ♗f6 21 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 22 d6! ♕xd6 23 ♕c3 and Black cannot cope with the double attack on c8 and h8.

18 ♗f4 ♖de8 19 a4 ♗e5 20 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 21 d4 ♖e4 22 dxc6 dxc6 23 d5

Sax should probably have exchanged on b5 at this point so that Black is forced to decide which way to take back: 23 axb5 axb5 (23...♕xb5 24 f3! ♖e7 25 ♗c4 ♕b6 26 d5 cxd5 27 ♗xa6+ ♔d7 28 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 29 ♖c5 leaves Black with big problems with his king) 24 d5 ♖d8 25 f3 ♖ee8 26 ♕c3 ♖d6 27 ♕b4 ♖ed8 28 ♖c5 ♔b8 29 ♖fc1 and White has strong pressure.

23...♖f8?

The end of the game has some problems which I presume are relay errors. After 23...♖d8 White is better but it's not the end of the world for the second player: for example, 24 axb5 ♕xb5 25 ♕c3 c5 26 ♗c4 (26 ♕xc5+ ♕xc5 27 ♖xc5+ ♔d7 is a slightly unpleasant endgame despite the extra pawn, as Black's pieces are so much more centralized) 26...♕b6 27 ♖fd1 leaves White with an edge.

24 ♕d1?

24 dxc6 ♗xc6 25 ♕d6 would be an immediate win.

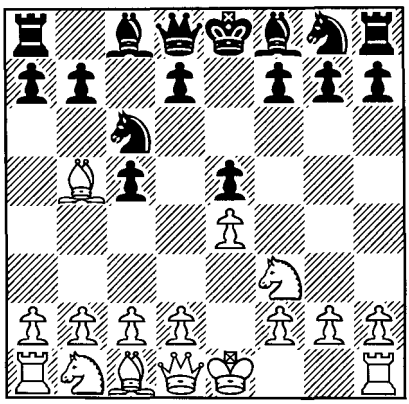
24...♔b8? 25 dxc6 ♗xc6 26 ♕f3??

26 ♕d6+.

26...♗b7 1-0

Game 57
S.Rublevsky-V.Zvjaginsev
Russian Team Championship 2006

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 e5



One of Black's main aims in the Rossolimo is often to take control of the centre. However, here ...e7-e5 is too early as it severely weakens the f7-square and allows White to open up the position with c2-c3 and d2-d4 before Black is ready.

4 0-0

Getting the king to safety and also threatening to take on c6 and pick up the e5-pawn. White cannot yet win the pawn with 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 ♘xe5 as Black has 5...♕d4, just like in the Ruy Lopez.

4...♘ge7

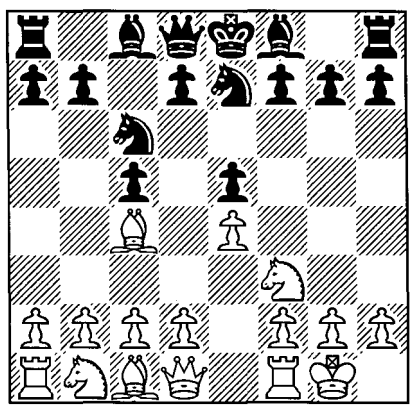
Alternatively:

a) 4...d6 5 c3 preparing d2-d4 gives White an easy advantage: 5...♕b6 (the only try to impede White's idea; otherwise 5...♗d7 6 d4 ♗e7 7 dxe5 dxe5 8 ♘bd2 ♕c7 9 ♘c4 ♘f6 10 ♗xc6 ♗xc6, as in B.Kreiman-E.Sevillano, Los Angeles 2004, and then 11 ♘cxe5 ♗xe4 12 ♕a4+ ♗c6 13 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 14 ♕xc6+ bxc6 15 ♘e5 leaves Black in a dreadful queenless middlegame) 6 ♘a3 ♗g4 7 d4 0-0-0 8 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 9 ♘xe5! ♗xd1 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 ♖xd1 left White a clear pawn up in V.Spasov-N.Managadze, Athens 2000.

b) 4...♗d6 5 c3 isn't so different. White will open up the centre with d2-d4 with the advantage: 5...a6 (5...♕f6 6 d4 cxd4 7 ♗xc6 dxc6 8 cxd4 ♗g4 9 ♘bd2 is better for White as 9...exd4? fails to 10 e5! ♗xe5 11 ♕e1) 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 d4 leaves White with a useful initiative. Black tried 7...♗g4?! in H.Grund-T.Bopp, German League 1996, but 8 dxe5 ♗xf3 9 ♕xd6 ♗xe4 10 ♕xc5 won a pawn. .

c) 4...♕f6 prevents our d4 plan, but looks rather odd: 5 d3 h6 6 ♘c3 ♘ge7 7 ♗c4 d6 8 ♘e1 g5 9 ♘b5 ♖b8 10 c3 a6 11 ♘c7+ ♔d8 12 ♘d5 ♘xd5 13 ♗xd5 ♘e7 14 ♗b3 ♗e6 15 ♗xe6 fxe6 16 ♗e3 ♘c6 17 ♘c2 ♖h7 all looked very artificial by Black in I.Hera-L.Felegyhazi, Hungarian League 2000, and here 18 b4! would have left White with a big advantage.

5 ♗c4!?



This is a very sneaky move. White moves his bishop twice, but now Black struggles to defend the f7-square.

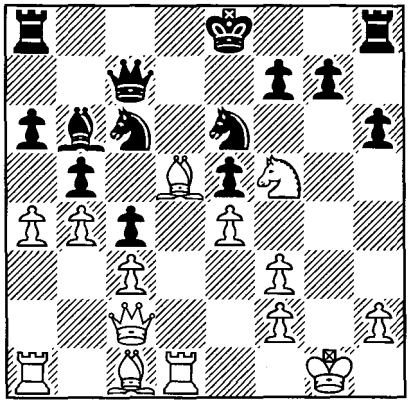
5...♘g6

This is regarded as the best way to defend against 6 ♘g5. Others:

a) 5...d5 6 exd5 ♘xd5 7 ♖e1 f6 8 d4! cxd4

9 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 10 ♕xd4 ♗e6 11 ♕e4 ♕a5 (Black gets out of the way of a pin down the d-file) 12 ♗d2 ♕c5 13 ♗e3 ♕a5 14 ♘d2 ♖d8 15 ♘f3 and White has a huge lead in development and a very strong initiative.

b) 5...h6 is the other way to defend against 6 ♘g5, but this leaves Black with problems developing the rest of his pieces: 6 c3! (this is even stronger than in our main game as White threatens both 7 d4 and 7 ♕b3) 6...♕c7 (6...d6?! 7 ♕b3! f6 8 d4 ♕b6 9 ♗f7+ ♔d8 10 dxc5 ♕xb3 11 axb3 dxc5 12 ♗e3 was definitely not a pretty opening for Black and he lost quickly after 12...♘g8 13 ♘h4! g5 14 ♘g6 ♖h7 15 ♖d1+ ♔c7 16 ♗xg8 ♖g7 17 ♘xf8 ♖xg8 18 ♗xc5 ♗g4 19 f3 and 1-0 in O.Nikolenko-A.Flerov, Moscow 2002) 7 ♕b3 ♘d8 8 d4 d6 and Black had managed to defend against all the threats, but was extremely passive. The French Grandmaster continued 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 ♘a3!? a6 11 ♖d1 ♘ec6 12 ♗d5 ♗g4 13 ♘c4 ♗xf3 14 gxf3 b5 15 ♘e3 c4 16 ♕c2 ♗c5 in C.Bauer-K,Shirazi, Vandoeuvre 2004, when the most active way to continue looks to be 17 ♘f5 ♘e6 18 b4! ♗b6 19 a4.



Here White's queenside and central play is far more important than his rather irrelevant kingside weakness.

c) Of course Black must avoid 5...g6? which allows 6 ♘g5! (Emms) and there's no way to defend f7: 6...d5 7 exd5 ♘xd5 8 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 9 ♕f3+ ♔e6 10 ♘c3. This position reminds one of the Fried Liver Attack, 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♘f6 4 ♘g5 d5 5 exd5 ♘xd5 6 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 7 ♕f3+ ♔e6 8 ♘c3. That position has been under a lot of scrutiny to see if Black can survive, but here there's no such debate as he cannot defend his knight with his c-pawn and thus 10...♘ce7 11 d4! cxd4 12 ♗g5! dxc3 13 ♗xd5+ (or 13 ♕f6+ ♔d7 14 ♖ad1, also winning) 13...♕xd5 14 ♕f6+ ♔d7 15 ♖ad1 wins swiftly.

6 c3

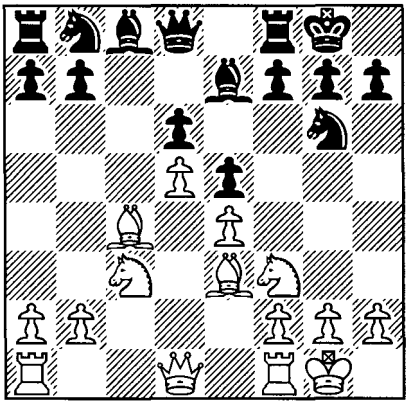
Opening up the centre, leaving White with the better structure and more active pieces.

6...♗e7 7 d4 cxd4

Black has also kept the centre with 7...d6, but then we can exchange on c5: 8 dxc5 dxc5 9 ♗d5 (also tempting is 9 ♕xd8+ ♘xd8 10 ♗e3 0-0 11 ♖d1 when White's better structure allows him control of the d5-outpost and play against Black's queenside) 9...♕c7 10 ♘a3 a6 (as tried in K.Neumeier-K.Doskocil, Oberwart 2004; 10...0-0 11 ♘g5 ♗xg5 12 ♗xg5 ♘f4 13 ♘b5 ♕d7 was preferred in R.Burnett-F.Sosa Macho, Maringa 1991, when I like the aesthetically pleasing 14 ♘d6!), and now 11 ♘g5 ♗xg5 (11...0-0? fails to 12 ♘xh7! ♔xh7 13 ♕h5+ ♔g8 14 ♕xg6) 12 ♗xg5 0-0 (12...h6 13 ♗xc6+!) 13 ♕h5 leaves White better positionally and with the initiative.

8 cxd4 d6 9 d5 ♘b8 10 ♘c3 0-0 11 ♗e3

The pawn centre is typical of an Old Indian, but here White has an easy plan of playing on the queenside, combining play down the c-file with an a2-a4-a5 advance. As King's Indian players will know, the trade of c-pawns highly favours White as it weakens both d6 and b6.



11...a6

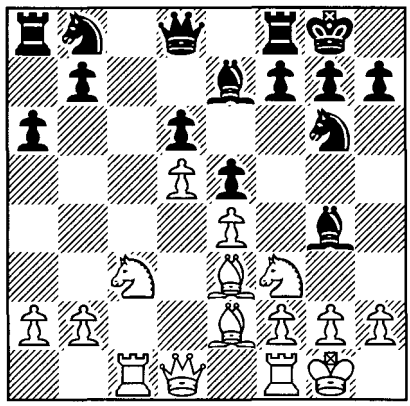
Later a German Grandmaster tried to improve with 11...♘h4, but having switched sides Zvjaginsev gave a textbook example of how White's queenside play should progress: 12 ♘xh4 ♗xh4 13 ♖c1 ♗g5 14 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 15 ♘b5 ♕e7 16 ♗e2 ♘d7 17 ♕a4! ♘c5 18 ♕c2 ♘a6 19 ♘c7 ♘xc7 20 ♕xc7 (again we see that White's possession of the c-file is a major headache for Black) 20...♗d7 21 ♗g4! ♖fd8 22 ♕xb7 ♖ab8 23 ♕xa7 ♖a8 24 ♕c7 ♖ac8 25 ♕xd7! (forced if White wanted to play for the win, but also very strong) 25...♖xd7 26 ♖xc8+ ♖d8 27 ♖fc1 f5 (the only way to retain the queen) 28 ♗xf5 and White really should have converted the whole point in V.Zvjaginsev-D.Baramidze, Kallithea 2008.

12 ♖c1 ♗g4

12...b5 might look tempting, but Black shouldn't really be playing on the queenside as this weakens so many squares. White could continue 13 ♗e2 ♘d7 14 b4 ♘b6 15 a4 bxa4 16 ♘xa4 ♘xa4 17 ♕xa4 when his queenside play is clearly stronger than any counterplay on the kingside.

13 ♗e2

This prepares the positional threat of 14 ♘d2. White would like to exchange the light-squared bishops. This is due to the fact that Black needs that bishop to attack with on the kingside. Once they are exchanged, if Black tries the typical ...f7-f5 break then White will simply take and so claim the e4- and e6- light squares.



13...♘f4

Zvjaginsev goes for the aggressive option and tries to make use of his strangely-placed knight. 13...♗xf3 is objectively best, although 14 ♗xf3 ♗g5 15 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 16 ♗g4!? (preventing Black's queenside developing) 16...♕d8 (16...♘f4 is well met by 17 h4!) 17 ♕d2 ♘d7 18 ♕e3 leaves Black extremely passive while White can slowly improve on both flanks.

14 ♘d2

Rublevsky declines to give Black any counterplay and continues with his plan of transferring his pieces to the queenside.

14 ♗xf4 was also possible, but Black can sacrifice for some squares with 14...exf4 (14...♗xf3 15 ♗e3 ♗xe2 16 ♘xe2 leaves Black in a dreary position without any prospects, especially as he cannot exchange the dark-squared bishops: 16...♗g5 17 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 18 ♖c7 gives White too much activity) 15 ♕d2 ♗xf3 16 ♗xf3 and then:

a) 16...♘d7 17 ♕xf4 ♗g5 18 ♕xd6 ♗xc1 19 ♖xc1 and White's two pawns vastly outrate the extra exchange.

b) 16...♗g5 17 e5! dxe5 18 ♘e4 gives White a very promising initiative.

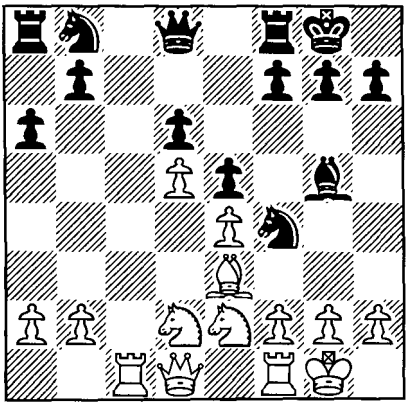
c) 16...♖e8!? 17 ♘e2 ♘d7 18 ♘xf4 (ignoring the pawn with 18 ♖c2 is more principled) 18...♗g5 19 g3 ♘e5 gives Black some play and was probably Zvjaginsev's idea.

15 ♗xe2

It was possible to keep the bishop with 14...♘xe2+, but 15 ♘xe2 ♘d7 16 f3 ♗h5 17 ♕b3 leaves the bishop offside and powerless to prevent White's queenside initiative.

15 ♘xe2 ♗g5

Zvjaginsev tries to keep some kingside play going, but the position looks like a bad King's Indian. Instead 15...♘xe2+ 16 ♕xe2 would actually transpose to a position seen earlier where Black lacks a good plan.



16 ♘xf4

Keeping it simple. However 16 ♘c4! was very strong: 16...b5 (the problem is Black cannot develop his b8-knight) 17 ♘b6 ♖a7 18 ♘xf4 ♗xf4 (18...exf4 19 ♗d4 leaves White with complete control; if Black could get a knight to e5 he'd be happy, but of course that's not going to happen) 19 ♖c8 ♕g5 20 ♕c2 and White's control of the c-file has allowed him to penetrate into Black's position. The following line is semi-forced: 20...♗xe3 21 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 22 ♕c8+ ♔e7 23 ♕xb8 ♗xb6 24 ♕xb6 ♖d7 25 ♕xa6 and White picks up a pawn.

16...exf4 17 ♗d4 f3!?

Black desperately tries for counterplay, although after an accurate response, this just loses a pawn. 17...♘d7 18 ♕g4 ♖e8 19 ♖fe1 would keep material equality, but Black's position is rather unpleasant. White will exchange off the knight if it ever jumps into e5, leaving him with a good knight versus bad bishop position.

18 g3 ♘d7 19 ♖c3 ♖e8

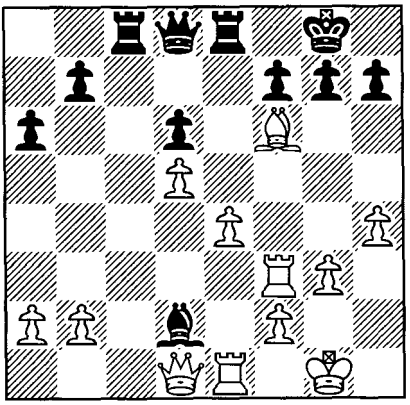
19...f5 saves the pawn, but only temporarily: 20 ♖xf3 ♗xd2 21 ♕xd2 fxe4 22 ♖f4 ♖xf4 23 ♕xf4 ♕e7 24 ♖e1 ♖e8 25 f3 and White finally wins the pawn with very good winning chances.

20 ♖e1 ♘f6 21 ♖xf3

And the pawn drops.

21...♖c8 22 h4 ♗xd2 23 ♗xf6!

Rublevsky continues his simple play which has served him so well in this game. The e4-pawn isn't actually en prise after 23 ♕xd2, but the position is more complicated: 23...♖xe4 (23...♘g4!? is a good practical try; in a position a pawn down, Black should endeavour to keep any imbalance even if that's only knight versus bishop) 24 ♖xe4 ♘xe4 25 ♕f4 ♘f6 26 ♔g2 and White can choose when to exchange into the rook endgame a pawn up.



23...♕a5

Necessary. After 23...gxf6 24 ♕xd2 ♖c4 25 ♖f4 Black's king won't survive for long.

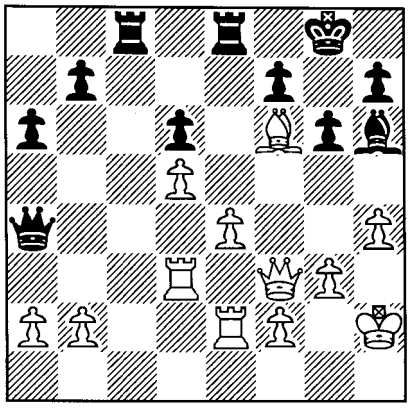
24 ♖a3 ♕b4 25 ♕g4

25 ♖a4! is also strong, forcing 25...♕c5 (if 25...♗xe1? 26 ♖xb4 ♗xb4 27 ♕g4 g6 28 ♕f4 and Black cannot stop a mate on g7; 25...♕b5? 26 ♕xd2 ♕xa4 27 ♕g5 also mates) 26 ♕xd2 gxf6 27 ♕f4 and Black's king has been opened up.

25...g6 26 ♖b3 ♕c4 27 ♖e2

Continuing to keep everything defended, but even better was 27 ♖d1! when again grabbing the e4-pawn is extremely risky: 27...♖xe4 28 ♕f3 ♗a5 (28...♗h6 29 ♖c3 picks up the queen) 29 ♖xb7 and the pressure on f7 is extremely difficult to handle.

27...♕c1+ 28 ♔h2 ♕d1 29 ♕f3 ♗h6 30 ♖d3 ♕a4



31 e5!

Rublevsky has coordinated his pieces perfectly and now breaks in the centre.

31...♕d7

31...dxe5 32 ♗xe5 ♗g7 33 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 34 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 35 d6 and the d-pawn decides the game.

32 e6! fxe6 33 dxe6 ♖xe6 34 ♖xe6

34 ♕d5! ♖ce8 35 ♖f3 would leave Black completely bound down. He can try 35...♕c6, but after 36 ♖xe6! ♕xd5 37 ♖xe8+ ♔f7 38 ♖e7+ ♔g8 39 ♖c3 ♕f5 40 Black won't be able to handle two rooks on the seventh.

34...♕xe6 35 ♕xb7 ♖f8 36 ♗d4 ♕xa2

Black regains his pawn, but his loose king will prove his downfall.

37 ♖c3

37 ♖b3!, blocking the queen out of the game, should be considered.

37...♖f7 38 ♖c8+ ♗f8 39 ♕c6 ♕e6 40 ♕xa6

Black's material parity didn't last long. Now he has no real practical chances as he won't be able to defend against both the threats to his king and the passed b-pawn.

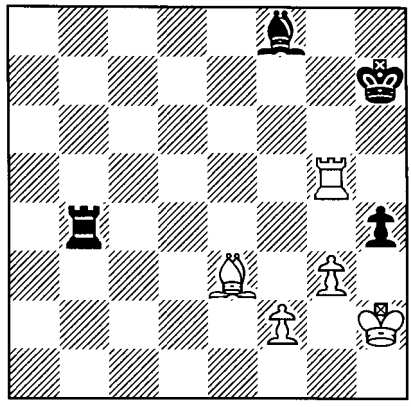
40...♕g4 41 ♗e3 h5 42 ♕c6 g5

Zvjaginsev won't go down without a fight!

43 ♕c4

Rublevsky trusts that the passed b-pawn will win any endgame.

43...♕xc4 44 ♖xc4 gxh4 45 ♖xh4 ♖f5 46 ♖a4 ♖b5 47 b4 d5 48 ♖a5! ♖xb4 49 ♖xd5 h4 50 ♖g5+ ♔h7



51 g4!

It's important that White saw he could keep his two connected passed pawns. Now it's an easy textbook win.

51...♗d6+

51...♗e7 52 ♖h5+ ♔g7 53 ♗g5 ♗xg5 54

♖xg5+ ♔h6 55 ♖h5+ ♔g7 56 ♖xh4 would have been no different.

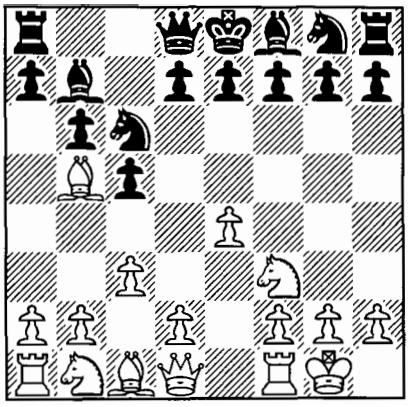
52 ♔h3 ♖b3 53 ♖h5+ ♔g7 54 ♔xh4 1-0

Game 58
M.Adams-E.Arslan
Turkish Team Championship 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6

This move is surprisingly popular, but seeing as we were going to exchange on c6 against any normal developing move, it basically loses a tempo. Here I've also decided to have a look at some of the other strange tries Black's been known to go for:

a) 3...b6?! is played occasionally. We have the choice of reaching our typical positions with 4 ♗xc6 or else trying to exploit Black's lack of kingside development with 4 0-0 ♗b7 5 c3, preparing a big centre.



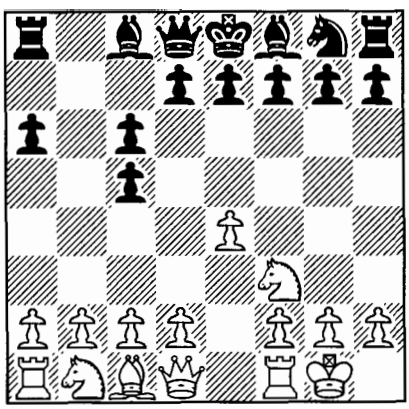
Black erred and lost immediately with 5...d5? (5...♘f6 is an improvement, although after the 6 ♖e1 g6 7 d4 cxd4 8 cxd4 ♖c8 9 ♘c3 ♗g7 10 e5 ♘g8 11 d5 ♘b8 of V.Panush-Buskov, Kishinev 1993, 12 e6 would have been decisive) 6 ♕a4! ♖c8 7 ♕xa7 ♖c7 8 ♘e5 e6 9 exd5 exd5 10 ♖e1 ♗e7 11 ♕xb6 ♕c8 12 d4 ♔f8 13 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 14 ♗f4 and even the Latvian Wizard can't have won many games that easily, M.Tal-J.Bellon Lopez, Kapfenberg 1970.

b) 3...d5?! is optimistic, but White has played nothing which merits this lunge. Indeed, after 4 exd5 ♕xd5 It's a rather bad Centre-Counter for Black: 5 0-0 (5 ♘c3 ♕e6+ 6 ♗e2 ♗d7 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 9 ♕xd4 ♗c6 10 0-0, as in Y.Boidman-J.Abbet, Lausanne 2008, is a promising alternative if you wish to keep more pieces on the board) 5...♗g4 6 ♘c3! ♗xf3 7 ♘xd5 ♗xd1 8 ♖xd1 ♖c8 (Y.Solodovnichenko-T.Rattinger, Feffernitz 2005) 9 a4 e6 10 ♘e3 a6 11 ♗xc6+ ♖xc6 12 a5 with a pleasant positional edge.

c) 3...♕a5 was once played by Vallejo Pons, but it seems dubious as after 4 ♗xc6 Black rather regrets the offside nature of his queen. E.Sutovsky-F.Vallejo Pons, Moscow 2001, continued 4...bxc6 5 e5 (5 0-0 would be the normal method with an edge, but Sutovsky wanted to punish Black) 5...c4 6 ♕e2 ♗a6 7 ♘c3 ♖b8 8 0-0 ♘h6 9 d4 cxd3 10 cxd3 ♘f5 11 g4! ♘h6 12 h3 when I'm sure the Spaniard was regretting his creativity.

4 ♗xc6 dxc6

The alternative is 4...bxc6 5 0-0 and:



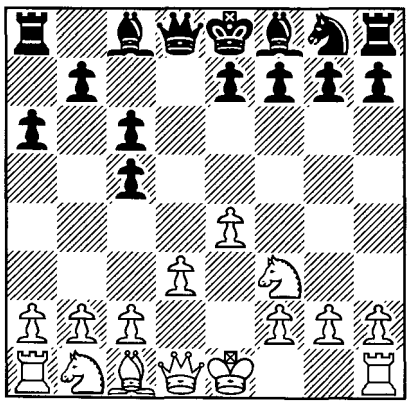
a) 5...g6 just leaves Black a tempo down on the 3...g6 4 ♗xc6 bxc6 variation. Indeed

we could exploit it immediately with 6 d4! cxd4 7 ♕xd4, with a comfortable plus.

b) 5...d6 would leave Black a tempo down on the Hybrid Variation (1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘c6) that we have already investigated in Chapter Four. Perhaps most in keeping with our repertoire would be 6 e5!?, a recent example of which ran 6...d5 7 d3 g6 8 b3 ♗g7 9 ♖e1 ♗g4 10 h3 ♗xf3 11 ♕xf3 e6 12 ♘c3 ♕c7 13 ♕e2 ♘e7 14 ♗a3 and the c5-pawn was dropping. Black tried 14...c4, but after 15 dxc4 dxc4 16 ♗d6 ♕b7 17 ♕xc4 ♖c8 18 ♘e4 ♕b5 19 ♕c3 ♘d5 20 ♕d2 resigned in M.Muzychuk-J.Milivojevic, Subotica 2008.

c) As we have observed in previous chapters, advancing the d-pawn is very risky as the c5-pawn becomes a significant weakness after 5...d5?!. White has many ways to reach a promising position here, but a straightforward solution was found in F.Erwich-D.Den Heeten, Hengelo 2001, which continued 6 d3 ♗g4 7 ♘bd2 e6 8 c4! (fixing the vulnerable c-pawns) 8...♗d6 when White had the surprising tactical solution 9 cxd5! cxd5 10 e5 ♗xf3 (10...♗xe5 11 ♕a4+ is the point) 11 ♘xf3 ♗e7 12 ♗e3 with strong pressure on the queenside while Black cannot develop his kingside.

5 d3



So we have reached a typical position from the 3...g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 variation, but instead of ...g6 Black has played ...a6 which is rather a big concession. Not only is it a move with no discernible benefits, it has also created a hole on b6 which Adams is quick to exploit.

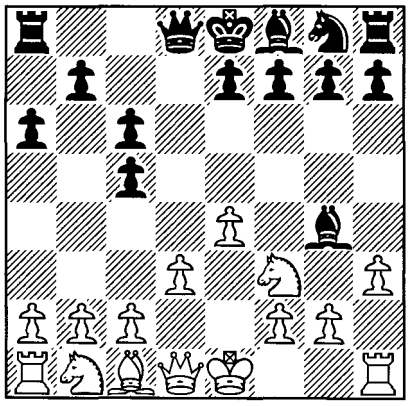
5...♗g4

Alternatively:

a) After 5...♘f6 6 ♗e3 e6 7 ♘bd2 ♗e7 8 h3 0-0 9 0-0 ♕c7 10 a4 a5 in J.Aabling Thomsen-K.Nielsen, Copenhagen 2010, White could have tried 11 ♗g5!? b6 12 e5 ♘d5 13 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 14 ♖e1 with promising dark-square control.

b) 5...♕c7 has been Black's other treatment of the position: 6 ♗e3 e5 7 ♘bd2 f6 8 a4! ♗g4?! (8...a5 was necessary, but White is clearly for preference after 9 ♘c4 ♗g4, as in S.Brynell-A.Mallahi, Istanbul Olympiad 2000, and then 10 0-0 b6 11 h3 ♗e6 12 ♘fd2 ♘e7 13 f4! with our typical break) 9 a5 0-0-0 10 ♘c4 h5 11 h3 ♗e6 12 ♘fd2 ♕f7 13 f4! and we have achieved all we want from the Rossolimo, E.Kengis-M.Thaler, Bern 1992.

6 h3



Here we don't have to worry that ♕d1xf3 will compromise our coordination as we have plenty of time. The position is

very similar to Rublevsky-Ni Hua examined at the start of the chapter, but obviously ...♘g8-f6 is more useful than ...a7-a6.

6...♗xf3

6...♗h5 is of course an option when we have a wide range of possibilities: 7 ♘bd2 (7 g4!? is an aggressive option, while 7 a4, as Adams plays in the game, is very sensible) 7...e6 8 a4 a5 9 ♘c4 ♕c7 10 ♗d2 b6 11 ♗c3 f6 12 g4!? ♗g6 13 e5 left White in control in G.Ragainis-V.Stasius, Klaipeda 2003.

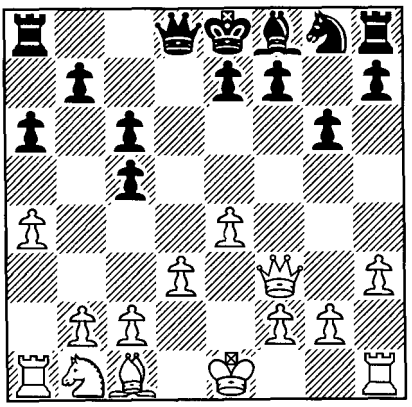
7 ♕xf3 g6

Black has tried a few different moves here, but unsurprisingly White keeps a comfortable edge against everything:

a) 7...♕c7 8 ♗e3 e5 9 ♘d2 ♘f6 10 0-0 ♗e7 was F.Handke-S.BeckingS Saarbruecken 2002, when 11 a4 a5 12 ♘c4 is very comfortable.

b) A recent game of a top 100-player saw 7...e5 8 ♕g3 f6 9 a4 a5 10 ♘a3 ♘e7 11 ♘c4 b5 (this doesn't help Black's queenside, but it's hard to offer alternatives) 12 ♘a3 ♕d7 13 ♕g4! ♕xg4 14 hxg4 ♖b8 15 ♗d2 b4 16 ♘c4 ♖a8 17 g5 ♘g6 18 gxf6 gxf6 19 ♖h5 ♗e7 20 ♔e2 0-0 21 ♖ah1 ♖f7 22 g3 and Black wasn't able to defend his chronic weaknesses on both flanks in S.Zhigalko-V.Galyamov, Tashkent 2010.

8 a4!



A novelty, but an extremely logical advance. The top English Grandmaster sees the hole on b6 and immediately exploits it.

8...♗g7

8...a5 really should be played. White then has a variety of strong looking continuations, but I quite like the surprising 9 ♖a3!? ♗g7 10 ♖b3 b6 11 ♗g5! when Black struggles to develop as 11...♘f6 12 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 (12...exf6 can be tried, but positionally-speaking Black's position is very suspect) 13 e5 picks up a pawn.

9 a5!

Fixing the hole on b6. Not only does this mean Black will have issues if a knight lands there, it also means he will struggle to defend his c5-pawn.

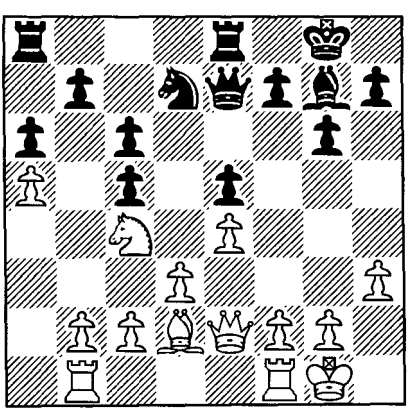
9...♘f6 10 ♘d2 ♘d7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♕e2

Preparing f2-f4 when White has a promising Grand Prix Attack position on the kingside and a complete bind on the queenside.

12...e5

Black tries to avoid being squeezed.

13 ♘c4 ♕e7 14 ♗d2 ♖fe8 15 ♖ab1



Preparing to open the b-file and put pressure on Black's backward b7-pawn.

15...♘f8 16 b4! cxb4 17 ♗xb4 c5 18 ♗d2 ♘e6 19 ♖b6

The style employed in this game is the

hallmark of Adams. All his moves look natural and simple, yet his opponents can't keep up. Arslan can blame, partly at least, his opening choice.

Rerouting the knight to d5 also makes sense: 19 ♘b6 ♖ad8 20 ♘d5 ♕d7 when White could consider exchanging bishops with 21 ♗h6!?

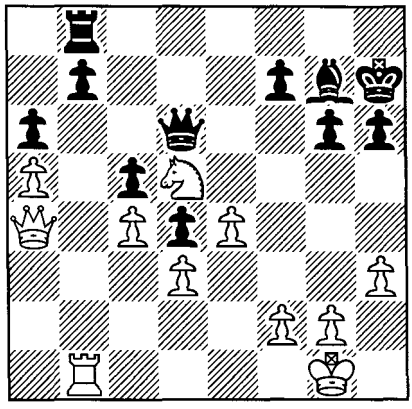
19...♘d4 20 ♕d1 ♖ad8 21 ♘e3 ♖d6 22 ♘d5 ♕d7 23 c3 ♘b5 24 ♖xd6 ♕xd6 25 ♕a4 ♖b8 26 ♖b1

The b5-knight looks unwieldy, but at least it's blocking White penetrating on the b-file. However, once White is ready, it'll be easy to shift with c3-c4.

26...h6 27 ♗e3 ♔h7 28 c4!

There we go.

28...♘d4 29 ♗xd4 exd4

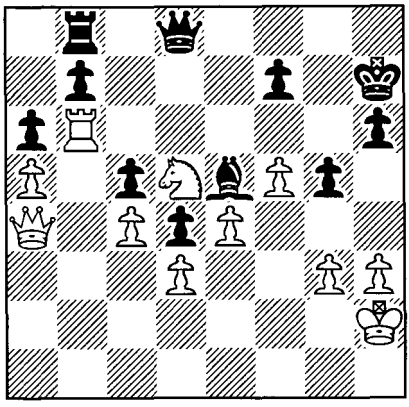


I don't think I could find a better example of a knight completely dominating the respective bishop. Black has been completely tied down the whole game. His two errors were 3...a6?! and not playing 8...a5.

30 f4

Adams takes the time to gain some more squares on the kingside.

30...♕d8 31 g3 g5 32 ♔h2 ♕d6 33 ♖b6 ♕d8 34 f5 ♗e5



35 ♕d1!

There's another juicy square available on h5. Now Arslan cannot defend his king.

35...♗g7 36 ♕h5 ♔g8 37 f6 ♗f8 38 h4 1-0

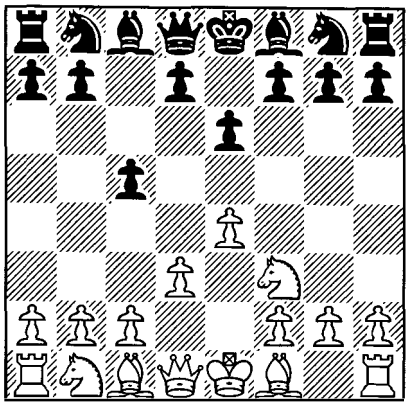
A smooth positional victory by Adams and we can conclude that 3...a6?!, although played very regularly, is a move we'd love to see played against us.

Conclusion

The most important lines in this chapter are seen in the first couple of games where Black plays 3...♘f6, which is a highly topical line. The rest of the chapter discusses Black's other unusual tries. In my view, 3...♘a5, is the only other legitimate try, as the remaining options leave White with a comfortable edge.

Chapter Nine
King's Indian Attack with ...d5

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3



The King's Indian Attack (KIA). A somewhat passive-looking start, but don't let that fool you; we may start slowly, but we intend to start an offensive on the kingside. Personally, I think the KIA is more effective once Black has committed to ...e6. This is due to the fact that a popular set-up for Black involves ...e7-e5, which will of course cost him an extra tempo here.

Black's set-ups can be divided roughly into two. Either he develops the bishop to e7 or he chooses to fianchetto with ...g7-g6 and I'll investigate both. In this chapter we'll examine positions in the King's Indian Attack in which Black plays an early ...d7-d5. The positions often resemble a French and indeed after an immediate...

3...d5

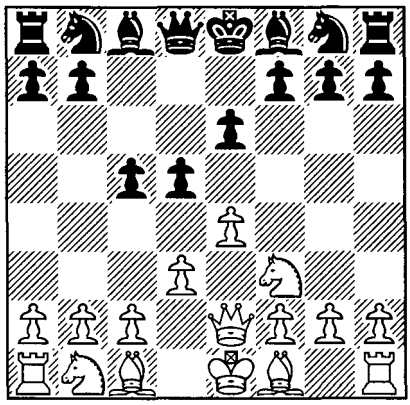
...we have transposed to a position more commonly reached by the move order 1 e4 e6 2 d3 c5 3 ♘f3 d5. In the next chapter I'll look at what happens if Black tries to keep more flexibility.

3...♘c6 4 g3 d5 5 ♕e2 ♘ge7 6 ♗g2 g6 is Black's other principal set-up and is analysed in the final two games of this chapter. Here the main move is 4 ♘d2, but I like:

4 ♕e2!?

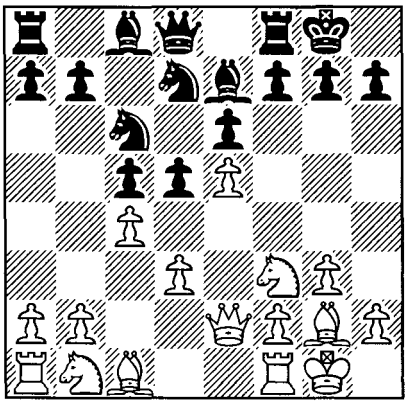
This appears to have first been played by the legendary Russian David Bronstein and was then picked up by the Latvian Wizard, Mikhail Tal. White immediately puts pressure along the e-file. There are further advantages too to delaying ♘bd2. Primarily, the c1-bishop is now free to develop, normally to f4 to support our e5-pawn. Secondly, the knight does not have to develop to d2 and can sometimes develop to c3 or

even to a3, from where it can jump into d6 via b5, or back to c2 to support our centre and the b2-b4 pawn advance.



Many strong grandmasters have scored well with this system, amongst them Igor Glek, Lev Psakhis and Alexei Fedorov should be highlighted. I've also scored pretty well with it and indeed it was my only set-up against the French for a time. The main line continues:

4...♘f6 5 g3 ♘c6 6 ♗g2 ♗e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 e5 ♘d7 9 c4!



White takes his chance to grab space in the centre and put Black in a bind. We want to attack on the kingside. However, as in the other chapters, first of all we want to prevent Black obtaining any counterplay. Then, once Black is tied up and has no play of his own, we can return to our ultimate plan of mating the black king! A bonus, from a repertoire point of view, is that if you enjoy playing the positions examined in this chapter then you have almost a complete repertoire against the French, via the move order 1 e4 e6 2 d3 (2 ♕e2!?) 2...d5 (or 2...c5 3 ♘f3) 3 ♕e2, although you should also be ready for Black's plans in which he doesn't play ...c7-c5, notably an immediate ...dxe4. It's an important point to consider that if your opponent is not a French player, it is likely he will not feel comfortable in the resulting positions.

Plans for White

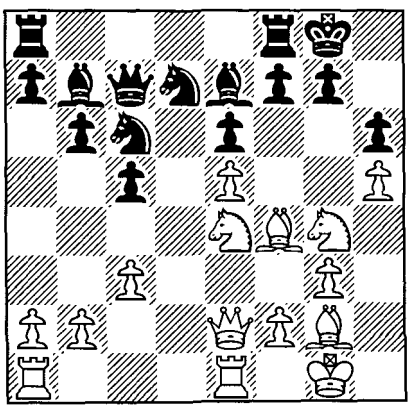
The last diagram shows the most important position in this chapter and it's necessary to feel comfortable here, as I predict you will reach this position frequently. Black has many possible move orders and we don't need to memorize every line, but if we know the ideas which we are aiming for, then we can be confident in fighting for an advantage.

It's important to defend the e5-square and we normally play our bishop to f4 and rook to e1. The pawn on e5 is the most important element in our attack. It controls the important f6-square so that White's queen can perhaps come out to g4 or h5, while we should be looking for attacks against g7 and h7, even contemplating piece sacrifices there.

We want to attack on the kingside and h2-h4 is an important part of our plan to gain space on that flank. This thrust has two principal points. Primarily, we want control over the g5-square, which prevents Black's tactic of ...g7-g5, forcing the bishop back and trying to win the e5-pawn. We should always be ready to deal with this

break, as this is Black's main source of counterplay on the kingside. However, Black weakens himself significantly when he makes this break and so we often have a tactical solution against his vulnerable king. Secondly, h2-h4 starts our kingside attack and prepares h4-h5. If Black does nothing, we are able to push the pawn all the way to h6, creating holes on Black's dark squares, in particular g5 and f6, whilst if Black plays ...h7-h6 himself, then we can prepare a sacrifice to open up the king with ♘h2-♘g4xh6 or simply g4-g5.

It's important to remember that in general we are not trying to attack on the queenside, as Black has more forces on that side of the board. Our intention is to block that side of the board and have free rein on the kingside. Our ideal aggressive set-up is as follows: bishop on f4, pawn on h5 and knights on g4 and e4, as shown by the following sample position.

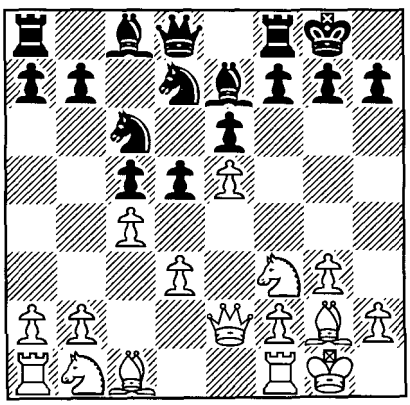


Black often feels obliged to play ...h7-h6 to prevent h5-h6, but after he has played this we are often in a position to sacrifice a piece for the pawns in front of his king to deliver a swift mate.

I have decided that it's not so relevant to have a repertoire outline for this chapter, as there are a lot of subtle different move orders for Black. In the King's Indian Attack ideas are also much more important than specific move orders. As a quick guide, though, Games 59 and 60 examine the position after 9 c4, which I consider to be the main line of this variation. Game 61 is very similar, but sees Black playing the knight instead to c7. Then Game 62 is concerned with most of Black's sidelines, while Games 63 and 64 look at Black playing with a queenside fianchetto and castling queenside. Finally, Games 65 and 66 look at Black's hybrid set-up with a kingside fianchetto and the knight developing to e7.

Game 59
I.Glek-T.Wyss
Saint Vincent 2002

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 d5 4 ♕e2 ♘f6 5 g3 ♗e7 6 ♗g2 ♘c6 7 0-0 0-0 8 e5 ♘d7 9 c4



We immediately put pressure on d5. If possible, we want Black to play either ...d5-d4 or ...dxc4, as this will make our bishop on g2 extremely strong and also give our knight a strong outpost on e4. If Black takes on c4, we can use the fact that we have played ♕e2 rather than ♖e1 to swing our rook across to d1. On the other hand, if

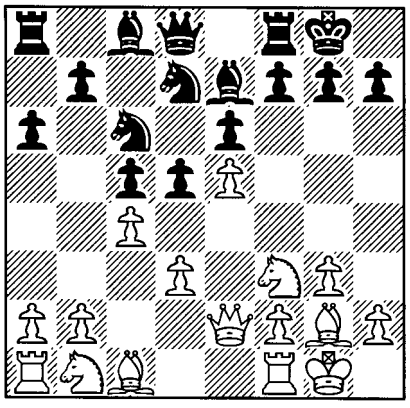
Black closes the centre with ...d5-d4 then he loses that outpost for himself and allows White to start proceedings on the kingside. Generally flank attacks work much more effectively once the centre has been closed. Just remember the axiom that flank attacks are best met by an attack in the centre. If the centre is closed then this is not possible and so our flank attack gains power.

We should also remember the potential downsides of c4. We have weakened the d4-square (that's why we really want Black to push with ...d5-d4 so that he doesn't have this square for his knight), while the c4-pawn can sometimes be a target for Black's counterplay with a quick ....b7-b5 break.

9...♘b6

Black's main defence. The knight is moved yet again, trying to put pressure on the c4-pawn and giving added protection to d5. However, Black has tried many moves here and I give a complete list below. 9...d4 is the second most-common move and looked at in Kasparov-Van Beurden next. That leaves:

a) 9...a6.



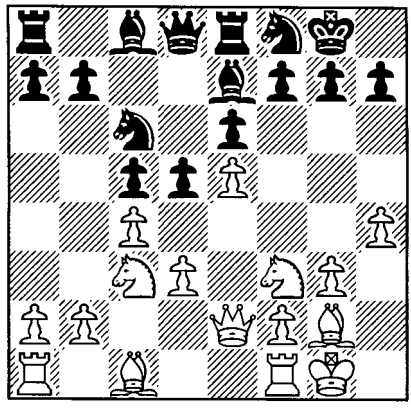
This was played in one of the earliest games in this line:

a1) Bronstein ignored Black's play on the queenside and slowly got on with his kingside play with 10 h4 b5 11 ♗f4 ♘b6 12 ♘bd2 ♗b7 in D.Bronstein-A.Kochyev, Moscow 1972, when 13 ♖fd1 looks more accurate to me, so that we can use the f1-square for our knight.

The tempo spent on speeding up our attack is more important than activating the a1-rook. We will proceed with the typical ♘f1-h2-g4 and h4-h5-h6.

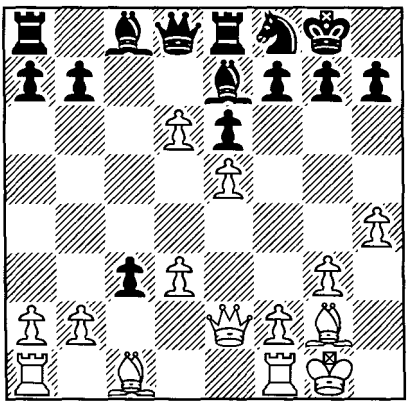
a2) 10 ♘c3 is an alternative plan when critical is 10...♘d4 (10...d4 11 ♘e4 ♘cxe5 12 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 13 ♘xc5 ♘xc4 14 ♘xb7 ♗xb7 15 ♗xb7 gave White a small edge in R.Hasangatin-M.Schulz, Marianske Lazne 2003) 11 ♘xd4 cxd4 12 cxd5!? (12 ♘b1 followed by pressuring the d4-pawn is a safer plan) 12...dxc3 13 d6 cxb2 14 ♕xb2 ♗g5 15 d4. Here White's pawns suffocate Black's pieces and give him good compensation.

b) 9...♖e8. We will see more of this plan in the notes to Kasparov-Van Beurden. Black adopts a passive strategy, retreating his knight to f8 to defend his king. Now 10 h4 ♘f8 11 ♘c3 is called for:



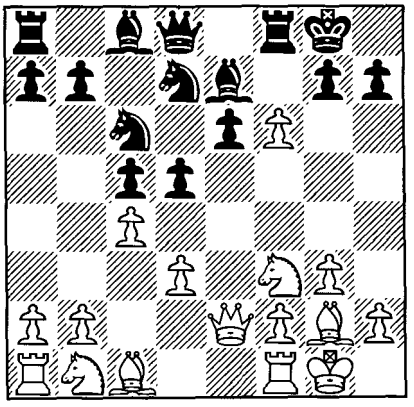
b1) It's important to see that after 11...d4 12 ♘e4 we should not be afraid of Black winning the e5-pawn with 12...♘g6, as 13 h5 ♘gxe5 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 gives White a pleasant choice between 15 h6!? or simply 15 ♘xc5, retrieving the pawn.

b2) 11...♘d4 is a common try by Black, but often this just creates a weakness. Here 12 ♘xd4!? looks very strong to me with the idea of temporarily sacrificing the knight with 12...cxd4 13 cxd5! dxc3 14 d6, trapping the dark-squared bishop.



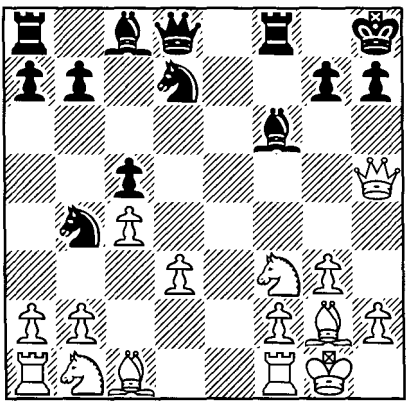
After the forced 14...cxb2 15 ♗xb2 ♗xd6 16 exd6 ♕xd6 our bishop-pair should give us a comfortable advantage on the open board.

c) The position resembles a French and so the typical freeing move in these structures of 9...f6 also has to be investigated, best met by 10 exf6



and then:

c1) 10...♗xf6!? was played in a battle between two future grandmasters in F.Vallejo Pons-D.Mastrovasilis, Menorca 1996. I think White should take the pawn, 11 ♕xe6+ ♔h8, which at first looks to give Black decent compensation, but I have found a way to take the initiative here for White with 12 ♕xd5! ♘b4 13 ♕h5.



White's kingside play will be sufficient compensation for the a1-rook, which Black can pick up in the corner. I think there are two critical variations:

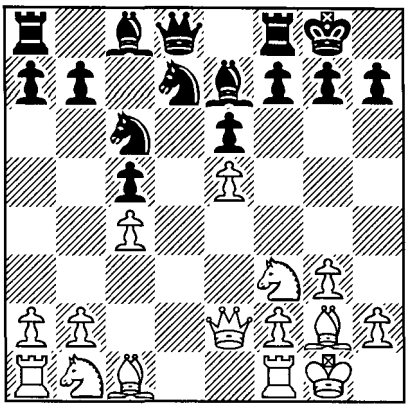
c11) 13...g6 14 ♕h6 and now Black has to take the exchange or the queen will retreat to d2 when he has no counterplay for the couple of pawns: 14...♘c2 15 ♘g5 ♕e7 16 ♘c3 ♗xc3 (or 16...♘xa1 17 ♘d5 ♕g7 18 ♘e6 ♕xh6 19 ♗xh6 ♖e8 20 ♘ec7 and White regains the material with interest) 17 bxc3 ♘xa1 18 ♘e4 grants White a clear advantage. The knight cannot escape from the corner, so we'll have two pawns for the exchange, rough material parity. White has a large development advantage and Black's king is exposed, so I'd say White's advantage is almost decisive.

c12) 13...♘c2 14 ♘g5 ♗xg5 15 ♗xg5 ♘f6 (15...♕b6 16 ♗e7! is extremely awkward) 16 ♕e2 ♘xa1 17 ♘c3 and again White will win the trapped knight and regain material equality, after which the bishop-pair and useful outposts for the

knight should promise White the better chances.

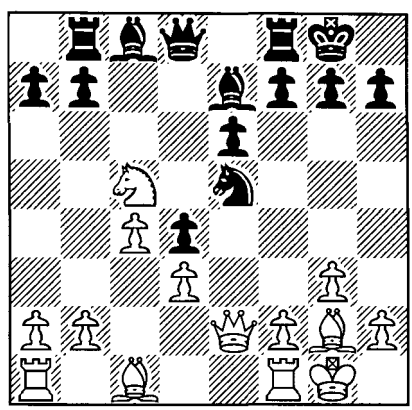
c2) After 10...♘xf6 I think White has an advantage thanks to his control of the e5-square. A few different moves have been tried, but I like Vallejo Pons' 11 b3 which he used to execute a miniature following 11...♘g4 12 ♗b2 ♗f6 13 ♘c3 ♘d4? (a blunder, but White had already taken control; indeed, 13...♘h6 14 ♘d2 increases the pressure on d5 and keeps White on top) 14 ♘xd4 cxd4 15 ♘b5 a6 16 ♘xd4 dxc4 17 ♕xg4 1-0, F.Vallejo Pons-N.Radovanovic, Paris 2008. Here 11 ♖e1 ♗d6 12 ♘c3 d4 13 ♘e4 ♘xe4 14 ♕xe4 was also a safe advantage in P.Piscopo-M.Ricci, Arvier 2009, while Emms' suggestion of 11 ♘c3 ♘d4 12 ♕d1! also looks very interesting; Black has a real problem developing his c8-bishop while White can put pressure on the d5-pawn).

d) 9...dxc4?! 10 dxc4 has been a frequent try, but it offers White very good chances.



On a positive point for Black, he can now try using the d4-square. However, White's pressure down the d-file will both control the d4-square and keep the d7-knight extremely passively placed. It's easy to see that the knight is caged on d7 and as long as White keeps control of e5, Black will have problems activating his pieces: 10...♕c7 11 ♗f4 ♖d8 (11...a6 gave White a quick victory after 12 ♖d1 ♘b6 13 ♘c3 ♖d8 14 ♘e4 ♘d4 15 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 16 ♘f6+! ♗xf6 – 16...gxf6 17 exf6 ♖xf4 18 fxe7 is no better – 17 exf6 ♖xf4 18 ♕e5! and 1-0 in A.Ivanov-J.Bryan, Windsor 2002) 12 ♘c3 ♘f8 13 ♘b5 ♕b6 14 ♖ad1 ♘d4 (Black plays his typical bid for counterplay, but again the d4-pawn just proves to be a weakness) 15 ♘bxd4 cxd4 16 b3 ♘g6 17 ♗c1! ♗c5 18 ♗b2 a5 19 ♕e4 a4 20 ♗xd4 and the pawn dropped so Black threw in the towel in J.Riff-Y.Krasucki, La Fere 2005.

e) 9...♖b8 is another logical attempt at generating counterplay with ...b7-b5, but here I think we can exploit a tactic on the h2-b8 diagonal to develop our knight with 10 ♘c3 d4 11 ♘e4. The idea is 11...♘dxe5 12 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 13 ♘xc5:



e1) 13...f6 14 f4!? ♗xc5 15 fxe5 must be better for White.

e2) 13...♗xc5 14 ♕xe5 ♕d6 15 ♗f4 ♕xe5 16 ♗xe5 ♖a8 17 ♖fb1 a5 18 a3 a4 19 b4 axb3 20 ♖xb3 is extremely strong for White.

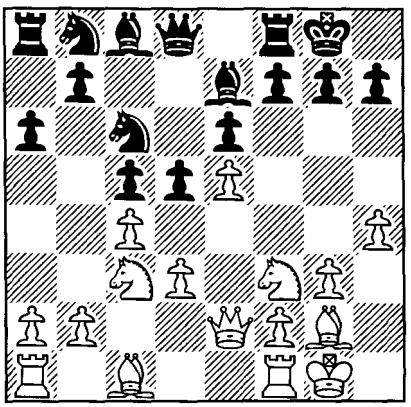
e3) 13...♘xc4 14 ♗f4!? looks critical:

e31) 14...e5 15 ♗xe5 ♗g4!? (15...♘xe5 16 ♕xe5 and the initiative promises White the better chances) 16 ♕xg4 ♘xe5 17 ♕e2 ♗xc5 18 ♕xe5. The presence of opposite-coloured bishops means that the endgames

are often drawn. However, most people forget that the opposite-coloured bishops also favour the side with the initiative. Therefore White still has an advantage here as the c5-bishop cannot provide any input on the light squares.

e32) 14...♘d6 15 ♖ac1 (15 ♘b3 f6! would keep the extra pawn) 15...b6 16 ♘b3 ♗b7 (now 16...f6 cannot be played due to the hole on c6) 17 ♘xd4 regains the pawn with a small advantage.

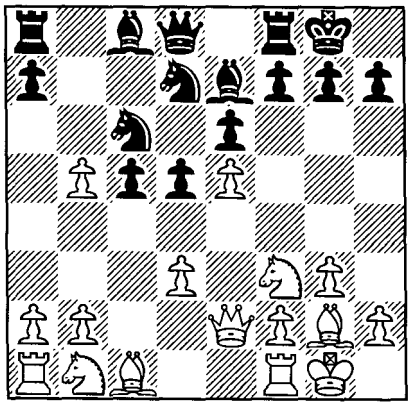
f) 9...♘db8 looks very slow. We might as well see how Igor Glek, one of the leading experts on the white side of the King's Indian Attack, exploited Black's slow plan, beginning 10 h4 a6 11 ♘c3:



f1) 11...♘d4 would look logical to free up a square for that knight which has been transferred to b8, but White has an idea we've seen before in the shape of 12 ♘xd4 cxd4 13 cxd5! dxc3 14 d6 cxb2 15 ♕xb2 ♗xd6 16 exd6 ♕xd6 17 ♗f4 with a continued initiative.

f2) 11...b5 12 ♗f4 b4 13 ♘a4 (the knight may look offside here, but Glek is planning on showing that c5 isn't easy to defend) 13...♖a7 14 ♖ac1 (14 cxd5!? exd5 15 ♖ac1 ♕a5 16 ♕c2 ♘d7 17 b3 would promise White a clear advantage: 18 d4 is the idea when we'll have possession of the important open c-file) 14...dxc4 15 ♖xc4 ♘a5 16 ♖cc1 ♖c7 17 ♘g5 ♗b7 18 ♘e4 ♗xe4 19 ♕xe4 ♘d7 20 d4 cxd4 21 ♕xd4 ♘c5 22 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 23 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 24 ♖xc5 ♗xc5 25 b3 and in I.Glek-G.Valenti, Saint Vincent 1999, although Black had survived into the endgame, he was in a lot of trouble. The bishop-pair on an open board would be enough on its own for a clear advantage, but things are even worse for Black as that knight on a5 cannot escape.

g) 9...b5!? has only been tried very rarely, but by some high-rated players. I believe White's best response is 10 cxb5:



g1) 10...♘a5 was tried in M.Paragua-A.Korobov, Beijing (blitz) 2008, and after 11 ♕c2 a6 12 a4 axb5 13 axb5 ♗b7 14 ♘a3!? White's extra pawn should count for something.

g2) 10...♘cb8 (R.Hasangatin-E.Sapunov, Tula 2002) 11 a4 a6 12 ♘a3 doesn't give Black enough compensation for the pawn. It's important to remember that after 12...axb5 we should recapture with 13 axb5!. This looks illogical, weakening our pawn structure, but the pawn is very useful in preventing Black's queenside pieces developing, which leaves White with a clear edge.

g3) 10...♘d4 11 ♘xd4 cxd4 (A.Strikovic-

M.Perez Fungueiro, Pontevedra 1992) 12 ♘a3 ♕b6 13 ♘c2 a6 14 b4! axb5 15 ♗b2 doesn't give Black any compensation for the d4-pawn which is about to drop.

Finally, we can return to 9...♘b6:

10 h4

We continue with our traditional plan, but this isn't forced:

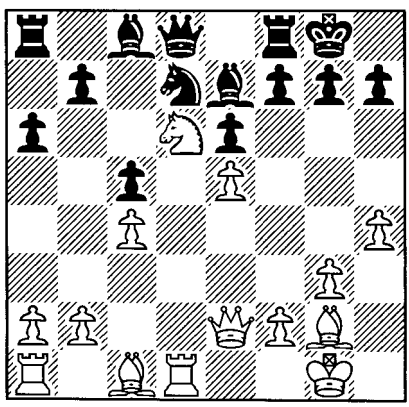
a) 10 ♗f4 will probably transpose, but if we are worried about an early ...f6 or ...f5 break by Black this could be a better move order, as now we have more control over e5 so 10...f6 isn't as strong. One game continued 11 exf6 ♗xf6 12 ♘c3 ♘d4 13 ♘xd4 cxd4 14 ♘b5 ♖f7 15 c5 ♘a4 16 ♖ac1 ♕a5 17 ♘d6 ♖e7 and in L.Cyborowski-K.Piorun, Warsaw 2006, the simple 18 ♗e5! would have left White with a decisive advantage.

b) We should be careful not to play 10 ♘c3 too early, though, as 10...♘d4 is sometimes awkward to deal with. Here 11 ♘xd4 cxd4 12 ♘b1 still looks fine for White though.

10...♗d7

Black's attempts at clarifying the position immediately fail:

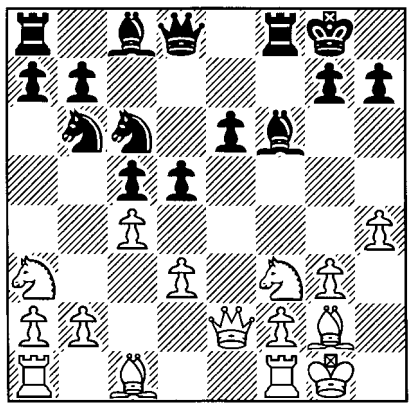
a) 10...dxc4 11 dxc4 ♘d4 12 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 13 ♘a3 ♕d8 14 ♖d1 ♘d7 15 ♘b5 a6 16 ♘d6 and White has an extremely good position with total control.



D.Popovic-G.Kosanovic, Subotica 2008, concluded 16...♗xd6 17 ♖xd6 ♕c7 18 ♗f4 ♘b8 19 ♖ad1 ♗d7 20 ♕g4 ♔h8 21 ♗g5 ♗e8 22 ♖d8 1-0.

b) 10...♘d4 immediately also favours White, as that d4-pawn proves to be a weakness: 11 ♘xd4 cxd4 12 b3 dxc4 13 dxc4 ♕c7 14 ♗b2 ♗c5 15 ♘a3 ♘d7 16 ♖fe1 ♗b4 17 ♘b5 ♕b8 18 ♗a3 (18 ♗xd4!? might be even stronger) 18...♗xa3 19 ♘xa3 f6 20 exf6 ♖xf6 21 f4! ♖g6 22 f5 d3 23 ♕e3 1-0, D.Schuh-A.Wettengel, Ditzingen 2009.

c) 10...f5 11 exf6 ♗xf6 12 ♘a3!? is an interesting way to develop the knight, with which White keeps control of the c4-pawn. Now:



c1) 12...♖e8 13 ♗e3 dxc4 14 dxc4 ♘d4 15 ♗xd4 cxd4 was G.Vescovi-R.Teixeira, Rio de Janeiro 2000, and here 16 ♖ad1 would have given White a pleasant advantage as 16...e5 17 c5 ♘d7 18 ♕c4+ ♔h8 19 ♘b5 would be great for him.

c2) 12...dxc4 (A.Stripunsky-S.Bercys, San Diego 2004) 13 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 14 dxc4 is comfortable for White with his better pawn structure.

d) 10...f6 11 exf6 will transpose to variation 'c'.

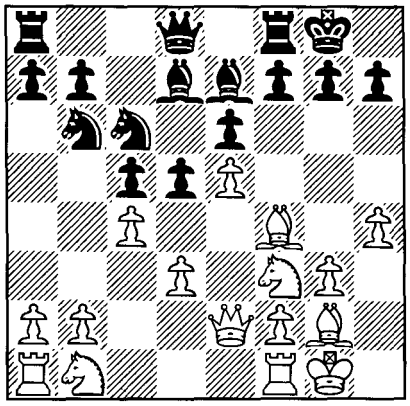
e) 10...a5 either here or on the following move is probably Black's best response. We

have two options: either we can stop the pawn going any further or we can ignore it and carry on with our own plan:

e1) 11 a4!? (giving away the b4-square might seem awkward, but it's not easy to see how Black can make much use of it) 11...♘b4 12 ♖d1 ♗d7 13 ♘c3 ♗c6 14 h5 h6 15 b3 ♕c7 16 ♗f4 ♖ad8 17 ♘b5 ♕b8 18 ♘h2 was more comfortable for White as he had stymied Black's counterplay in R.Djurhuus-B.Ostenstad, Asker 1997.

e2) 11 ♗f4 a4 12 ♘c3 ♗d7 13 ♘b5 looks like an interesting alternative to try. Exploiting the weakening of the b5- and d6-squares should give us a good game.

11 ♗f4

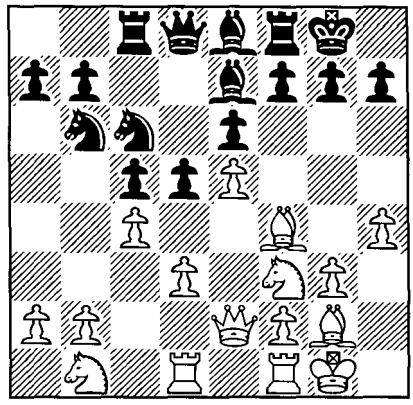


11...♘d4

Black's forces are very cramped so it's logical to exchange pieces, but the resulting d4-pawn proves to be a major liability for Black. Thus he might prefer:

a) 11...f5, blocking up the kingside, was tried in C.Bauer-A.Chernuschevich, Swiss League 2008, but this allows White a structural advantage following 12 exf6 ♗xf6 13 ♘c3 ♖e8 14 ♘e5 ♘xe5 15 ♗xe5 when control of the e5-square and pressure against d5 promises White a pleasant edge. Meanwhile Black has no counterplay of his own and must simply wait. I don't know about you, but I am always very happy when my opponent is playing for only a draw as it means we can carry on pressing without risk.

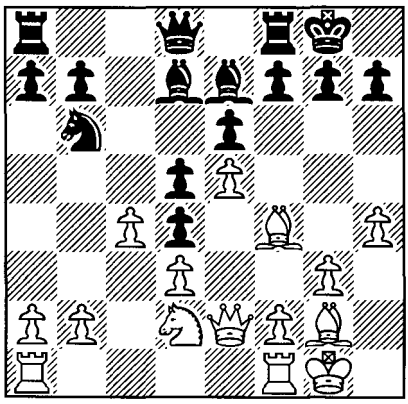
b) 11...♖c8 12 ♘bd2 (it's a difficult decision in these positions whether to develop the knight to c3 or d2; here we have already developed our bishop to f4, so there's no real reason that we shouldn't develop to d2, which gives added support to c4 and makes ...♘d4 ideas less effective) 12...♗e8 13 ♖ad1 ♘a4 14 ♘b1 ♘b6 proved that Black had no plan and just had to wait to see how we improve our position. Therefore there's no reason to rush and White continues to improve his position until he's ready to strike:



15 ♖fe1 ♘d4 (this move just gives White a weakness to hit, so Black should have continued with his passive defence, never an easy task though) 16 ♘xd4 cxd4 17 ♘d2 (17 ♕g4 is always a move we should consider, but here 17...h5! is an interesting defence; I still prefer White following 18 ♕xh5 f5 19 ♕e2 dxc4 20 ♗xb7 with an extra pawn, but there's no reason to allow Black any counterplay, so White keeps slowly improving his position) 17...dxc4 18 dxc4 d3 19 ♕g4 ♔h8 20 b3 was A.Ivanov-H.Van Riemsdijk, Cali 2001, when the d3-pawn was doomed in a very similar manner to the main game.

c) 11...a5 is very similar to the previous note when again we have the choice: 12 a4!? or 12 ♘c3 a4 13 ♘b5, with the latter transposing to note 'e2' to Black's 10th move, above.

12 ♘xd4 cxd4 13 ♘d2



13...♗c6

13...dxc4 14 dxc4 doesn't change very much and will probably simply transpose following 14...♗c6 15 ♖ad1.

14 ♖ad1

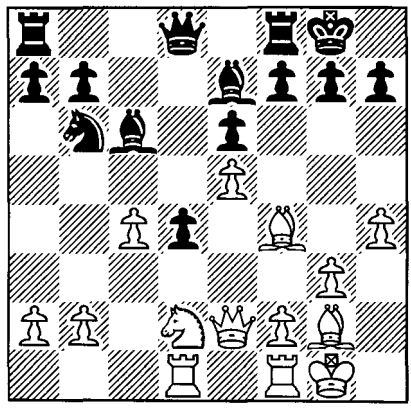
It may seem strange to move the a1-rook, as initially it seems that giving the d2-knight access to the f1-square would be more natural. However, following 14 ♖fd1 dxc4 15 dxc4 d3 16 ♕g4 ♕d4 I'd prefer the rook to be on f1 so that there are no tricks directed against f2. Having said that, 17 ♘b3 ♕xc4 18 ♘a5 ♕b4 19 ♗xc6 ♕xa5 20 ♗e4 still favours White.

14...dxc4

Critical, but now the d4-pawn proves an extreme weakness.

Instead 14...♘a4 was played in a very early game, which proved to be a quick success for White: 15 ♘b3 dxc4 (15...♕b6 is the only way to keep the d4-pawn, but White has a very comfortable advantage with 16 cxd5 ♗xd5 17 ♗xd5 exd5 18 ♖c1; indeed, this position is pretty grim for Black, as the d-pawns need constant protection for the rest of the game) 16 dxc4 ♗c5 17 ♗xc6 bxc6 18 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 19 ♗e3 and the position was hopeless for Black as after 19...d3 20 ♕g4 ♕e7 21 ♗g5 White's attack on the kingside is decisive, D.Bronstein-R.Dzindzichashvili, USSR Championship, Baku 1972.

15 dxc4



It's interesting that initially computer programs like Black here, but as they go deeper into the position they start to appreciate White's aggressive possibilities. The game is illustrative of these plans which the second player would do well to avoid.

15...d3 16 ♕g4

Immediately threatening 17 ♗h6.

16...♕d4 17 b3!

White takes a time-out to defend the c4-pawn. Black has problems stopping the kingside initiative and keeping his advanced d-pawn.

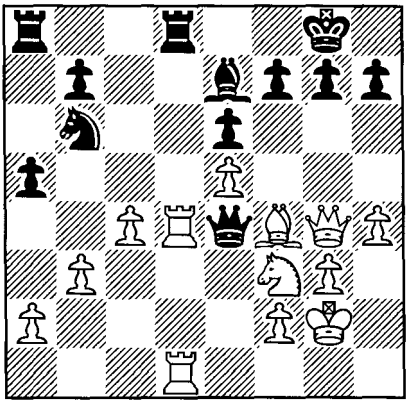
17...♗xg2

17...♖fd8 18 ♗xc6 bxc6 19 ♘f3 ♕c3 20 ♗h6 g6 21 ♕e4 also favours White as the d3-pawn will drop. Black's king is also a permanent weakness.

18 ♔xg2 ♖fd8 19 ♘f3 ♕e4

Or 19...♕c3 20 ♗e3 and White will easily pick up the d3-pawn.

20 ♖fe1 ♕c6 21 ♖e3 a5 22 ♖exd3 ♕e4 23 ♖d4



23...♕e2?

A blunder, but Black's position was already terrible. 23...♖xd4 was necessary, but 24 ♖xd4 ♕c6 leaves White in control and with an extra pawn.

24 ♗h6! 1-0

The queen is in fact trapped on e2, so Black resigned. After 24...g6 25 ♖1d2 ♖xd4 26 ♕xd4 she has nowhere to go.

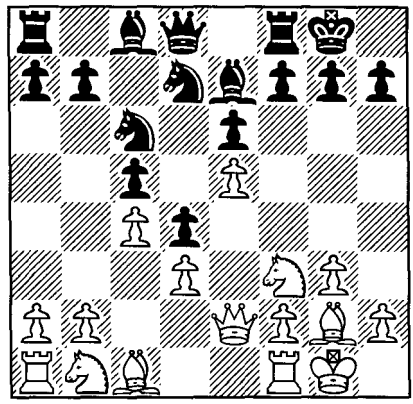
Game 60
G.Kasparov-M.Van Beurden
London (simul) 2003

1 e4 e6 2 ♕e2 c5 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 g3 ♗e7 5 ♗g2 ♘f6 6 d3 d5 7 0-0 0-0 8 e5 ♘d7 9 c4

Another move order which arrives at the main position.

9...d4

A sensible way of defending against the threat of 10 cxd5 and Black's most common alternative to 9...♘b6. However, Black relinquishes control of e4 and the long diagonal is opened for our g2-bishop. Other problems are that Black really wanted that d4-square for his knight while the text also takes pressure off the c4-pawn. Now that the major source of counterplay has dried up, i.e. attacking the c4-pawn, White should have the better chances.



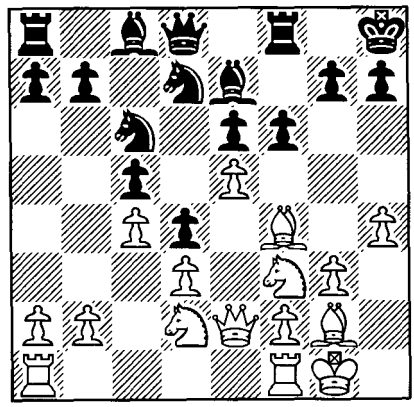
10 h4

10 ♖e1 probably transposes as we usually defend e5 at some point. However, it makes sense to play this move only when forced.

10...a6

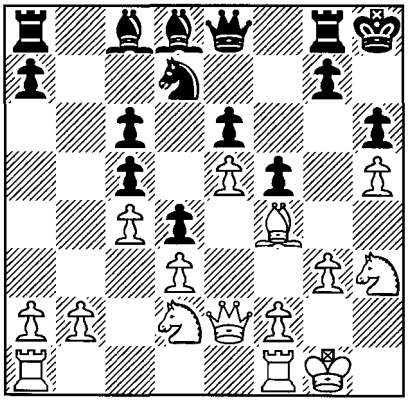
Practice has seen a number of others:

a) 10...♔h8 is a strange-looking move, but Black is preparing ...f7-f6 when his king is more secure in the corner. After 11 ♗f4 f6 12 ♘bd2 (Black's idea is to build a strong centre after 12 exf6 gxf6 when the position is very double-edged; here 13 ♕xe6?! cannot be advised as 13...♘de5 allows Black to take over the initiative) he can go:



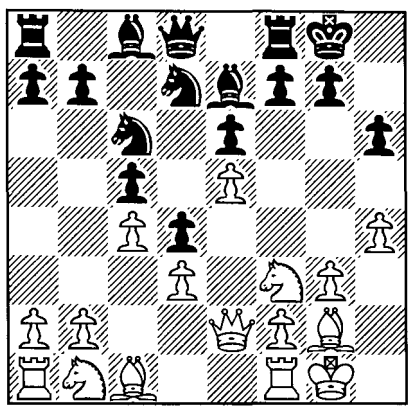
a1) The basic 12...fxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♘cxe5 14 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 15 ♕xe5 ♗d6 16 ♕e2 leaves White with a great advantage. Although Black has the bishop-pair, those pieces cannot work well together. Once Black plays ...e6-e5 to activate the light-squared bishop; the one on d6 gets blocked in. Meanwhile, e4 is a great square for our knight and the bishop on g2 dominates the board.

a2) 12...♕e8 was given an exclamation mark by John Emms, but after 13 ♗h3! (forcing Black to do something about his vulnerable e6-pawn) 13...f5 14 ♘g5 ♗d8 15 ♗g2 h6 16 ♘h3! Black's bid for counterplay has failed and White can return to attacking on the kingside. It may look like White has just lost a few tempi with ♗g2-h3-g2 and ♘f3-g5-h3, but we have forced Black to weaken himself with ...f6-f5 taking all the pressure off our e5-pawn. As Emms observes, we can improve our position with h4-h5, ♗g2-f3, ♔g1-g2, ♖f1-h1 and perhaps g3-g4. L.Psakhis-I.Smirin, Haifa 1995, continued 16...♖g8?! (Smirin attempts to obtain some counterplay with ...g7-g5, but this allows White to create a structural weakness) 17 ♗xc6! bxc6 18 h5, stopping any ideas of ...g7-g5.



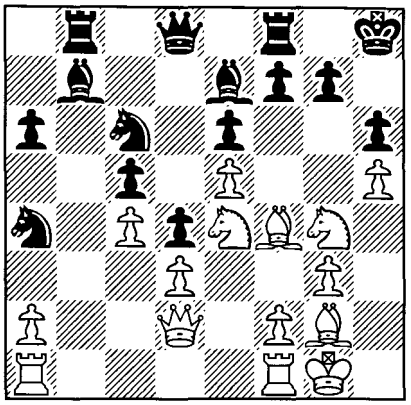
The doubled c-pawns are a definite weakness for Black and, perhaps just as importantly, he cannot create any counterplay on the queenside with ...b7-b5. Therefore White can keep improving his position, while Black must sit passively. I'll leave the rest of the game to show how such a strong grandmaster exploited his advantage: 18...♘f8 19 ♔g2 ♗d7 20 ♖h1 a5 21 ♘g1 ♕f7 22 ♘df3 ♗e8 23 ♕c2 ♕d7 24 ♘e2 ♗f7 25 ♗d2 ♕e8 26 ♘f4 ♖a7 27 ♖ae1 ♘h7 28 ♕d1 ♗g5 29 ♘xg5 ♘xg5 30 b3 ♘h7 31 ♕c1 ♘f8 32 f3 ♘d7 33 g4 fxg4 34 fxg4 a4 35 g5 hxg5 36 ♘g6+ ♔h7 37 ♗xg5 axb3 38 axb3 ♗xg6 39 hxg6+ ♔xg6 40 ♕d1 ♖a2+ 41 ♔g3 ♖h8 42 ♖xh8 ♕xh8 43 ♖h1 1-0.

b) 10...h6 is a typical move, taking control over the g5-square and preventing White's plan of h4-h5-h6.



Black normally waits until White has played h5 for this, but the positions often transpose. The following game of mine shows a typical strategy that we should try and adopt: 11 h5 (we don't ever want to allow Black the ...g7-g5 break if we can help it) 11...a6 12 ♗f4 ♖b8 13 ♘bd2 b5 14 b3 ♘b6 (we will see a few different positions like this; Black has grabbed space on the queenside, but now it's unclear how he can make progress, while we can start our kingside offensive) 15 ♘h2! ♗b7 16 ♘g4 (again we place our knight on g4, getting ready for

a decisive breakthrough) 16...♔h8 17 ♘e4 bxc4 18 bxc4 ♘a4 19 ♕d2! and Black had no defence against 20 ♗xh6.



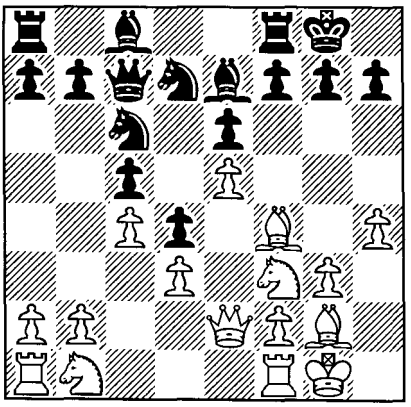
My opponent tried 19...♗g5, but after the simple 20 ♘xg5 hxg5 21 ♗xg5 ♕c7 22 ♗f6! Black has no way to avoid mate. He tried 22...♖g8, but resigned before I could play 23 ♕h6 mate in G.Jones-J.Frontali, Cortina d'Ampezzo 2002.

c) 10...♖e8 has been played a few times. Black's plan is passive, he wants to bring the d7- knight back into the defence. Now:

c1) 11 ♗f4 ♘f8 12 h5 f5 (Black plays in the same style as the last note, but his bid for play is double-edged) 13 exf6 ♗xf6 (13...gxf6 14 ♘h4 is also pleasant for White, especially following 14...f5 15 ♗xc6! bxc6 16 ♘f3 with great squares for our pieces) 14 ♘e5 ♘xe5 15 ♗xe5 ♘d7 16 ♗xf6 gxf6 17 ♘d2 and White had a comfortable advantage in A.Kim-N.Samakov, Dresden Olympiad 2008.

c2) Considering that Black wants to play ...♘f8-g6, there's a case for delaying developing the bishop to f4, where it can be hit: 11 ♘bd2 ♘f8 12 ♖e1 f5 (again Black is struggling for play, but this creates weaknesses in front of his king) 13 exf6 gxf6 14 ♘h2 ♗d7 15 ♘g4 ♔g7 16 ♘e4 f5 was L.Cyborowski-I.Brener, Mysliborz 2008, when White's most precise win is with 17 ♗h6+! ♔g8 18 ♘xc5! ♗xc5 19 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 20 ♕e5 ♖e7 (or 20...♕e7 21 ♘f6+ ♔f7 22 ♘d5!) 21 ♘f6+ ♔f7 22 ♘h5! and due to the threat of 23 ♕f6+, White regains his sacrificed piece with an ongoing attack.

d) 10...♕c7 has been played on quite a regular basis but seeing as we're planning on putting our bishop on f4 in any case, the move seems illogical to me. Thus 11 ♗f4 and then:



d1) 11...b6 12 ♘bd2 ♗b7 13 ♖fe1 ♖fe8 (13...♘b4 14 ♘f1 a6 15 a3 ♘c6 16 ♘1h2 b5 17 ♘g4 ♖fe8 18 h5 gave White the start of a serious initiative in S.Beshukov-Y.Drozdovsky, Moscow 1999) 14 ♘f1 a6 15 ♘1h2 b5 16 b3 ♘f8 17 h5 bxc4 18 bxc4 ♘b8 19 ♖ab1! (with threats on both sides of the board!) 19...♗c6 20 h6! (here we see what happens if Black refuses to play ...h6 himself) 20...g6 21 ♗g5 (with the dark-squared bishops gone, the squares around Black's king will prove extremely vulnerable) 21...♕d8 22 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 23 ♘g4 ♘fd7 24 ♕d2 ♖a7 25 ♕f4 ♖c8 26 ♖b3 ♖cc7 was A.Kovalev-I.Duben, Vienna 2009, when the easiest win would have been 27 ♘f6+! ♔h8 (27...♘xf6 28 ♕xf6! forces mate) 28 ♘g5 and White has far too many threats.

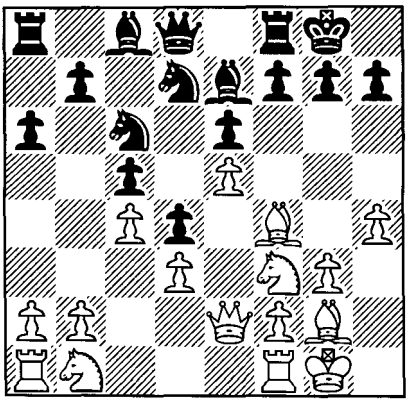
d2) 11...♖b8 12 ♖e1 b5 13 cxb5 ♖xb5 14

♘a3 ♖b8 15 ♘c4 again favours White and here we can copy Kasparov's play.

d3) 11...a6 12 ♘bd2 b5 13 ♖fe1 ♖b8 14 b3 ♗b7 and now, instead of the 15 ♘e4 of M.Paragua-S.Mahmud, Tarakan 2008, I'd prefer the thematic 15 h5 h6 16 ♘h2. A knight belongs on g4 in these structures and once we have played ♘e4, it will be harder to achieve this while successfully defending e5.

Returning to 10...a6:

11 ♗f4



11...h6

Or 11...♖b8 12 ♘h2! (preventing ...b7-b5 and relocating the knight to g4 which increases our kingside pressure) 12...♘a5 13 ♘d2 b5 14 b3 ♗b7 15 ♘e4 (if this is playable then it must be the best move, although we have to watch out for our e5-pawn of course; instead 15 ♗h3!?, as in D.Bronstein-B.Kelly, Hastings 1995, is also possible and John Emms examined this move in detail in his book, *Starting Out: King's Indian Attack*) 15...♘c6 16 ♘g4 h5 (otherwise we obtain perfect coordination with h4-h5) 17 ♘h2 ♘cxe5 18 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 19 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 20 ♕xe5 ♕d6 21 ♕xh5 and in this position White seems to be a safe pawn up.

12 ♖e1 b5

If 12...♖b8 13 ♘bd2 b5, then I would play 14 h5 with similar ideas to our main line.

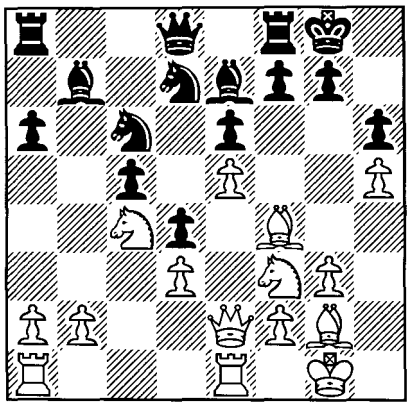
13 h5

13 ♘bd2 immediately would cut out Black's 13th-move alternative.

13...♗b7

Here 13...bxc4!? 14 dxc4 ♖b8 15 b3 a5 would give Black counterplay in the form of pressure against b3.

14 ♘bd2 bxc4 15 ♘xc4!



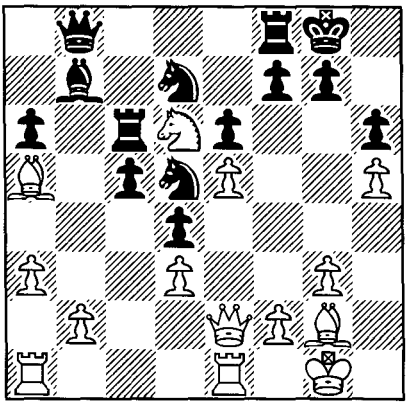
This cedes the d5-square, but Kasparov accurately assesses that the c4-knight is stronger than a knight on d5. It may look pretty there, but it does not achieve very much.

15...♘b4 16 a3 ♘d5 17 ♗d2 ♖c8

17...a5 would cut out Kasparov's next, but I still prefer White's chances following 18 ♘h2! a4 19 ♘g4, which is a typical manoeuvre in this line. The knight is very strong on g4 once we have played h5, as we open up the long diagonal for our g2-bishop and prepare to sacrifice a piece on h6.

18 ♗a5! ♕e8 19 ♘fd2 ♖c6 20 ♘e4 ♕b8 21 ♘ed6 ♗xd6 22 ♘xd6

Kasparov has taken full control of the position. Black now felt obliged to give up the exchange, but of course White has much the better chances.



22...♖xd6 23 exd6 ♕xd6 24 ♖ac1 ♗a8 25 ♗d2

The bishop has done its queenside job, so returns to pressure the kingside.

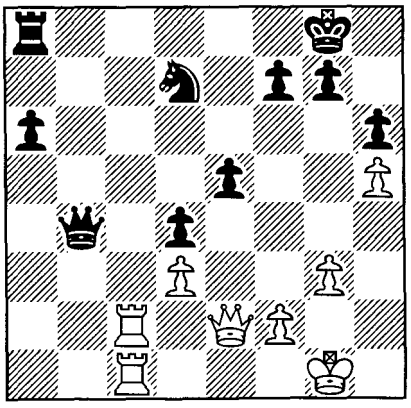
25...♖b8 26 b4 cxb4 27 axb4 e5

27...♘xb4 does not win a pawn, as 28 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 29 ♕e4 ♖d8 30 ♖c4 would regain the pawn and keep a clear advantage.

28 ♖c2!?

28 ♖c4 would keep the b4-pawn and looks simpler.

28...♘xb4 29 ♗xb4 ♕xb4 30 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 31 ♖ec1



So Black has two pawns for the exchange now, although White has retaken the initiative.

31...♕d6?

The threat of 32 ♖c8+ had to be stopped. Having said that, 31...♕f8 32 ♕e4 ♖b8 33 ♖c7 would grant White complete control over the proceedings.

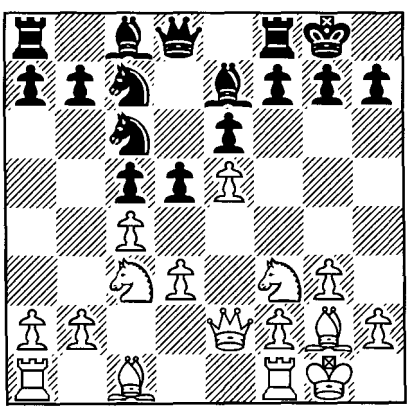
32 ♖c8+! ♖xc8 33 ♖xc8+ ♔h7 34 ♕e4+ 1-0

Game 61
N.Davies-G.Morrison
British League (4NCL) 2006

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 d5 4 ♕e2 ♘f6 5 g3 ♘c6 6 ♗g2 ♗e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 e5 ♘e8 9 c4 ♘c7

This is the point of ...♘e8. Black claims that defending d5 and supporting the ...b7-b5 break is more important than putting pressure on e5, which can be defended easily anyway. 9...f5 has also been played, but this creates a hole on e5: 10 exf6 ♗xf6 (revealing another reason for playing the knight to e8: now e6 is defended) 11 ♗f4 g5!? 12 ♗e3 d4 13 ♗c1 and Black will live to regret the holes his impulsive pawn thrusts have created.

10 ♘c3



This move looks strongest to me, simply developing the knight to an active square and slowing Black's queenside play. I have also tried 10 h4, but after 10...b5 Black has decent counterplay.

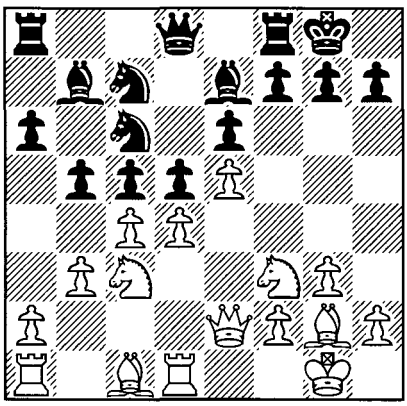
10...♖b8

Black needs to create counterplay with ...b7-b5 or else he will be extremely passive. He has tried to arrange this break in various ways:

a) 10...a6 11 b3 (11 a4 could be considered here too) 11...b5 12 ♖d1 indirectly defends c4 thanks to the pin along the d-file and also threatens to open up the position with d3-d4. Now:

a1) 12...f6 might be Black's best bid for counterplay, but after 13 ♗f4 he is obliged to lash out with the very risky 13...g5!?, otherwise White has a pleasant advantage with control of the board, a useful outpost on e5 once we exchange on f6 and Black will have a lot of holes in his position. Now 14 cxd5 ♘xd5 (both 14...gxf4 15 dxc6 and 14...exd5 15 exf6 are hopeless for Black) 15 ♘xd5 (15 ♗d2!? g4 16 ♘e1 ♘xe5 17 ♘xd5 exd5 18 d4! cxd4 19 ♗h6 ♖f7 20 ♖xd4 would give White great compensation) 15...exd5 16 ♗e3 g4 17 ♘h4 fxe5 18 ♖ac1 is very interesting. White will regain the pawn on c5 when it will be tough for Black to maintain his visually-impressive centre as it is not adequately supported.

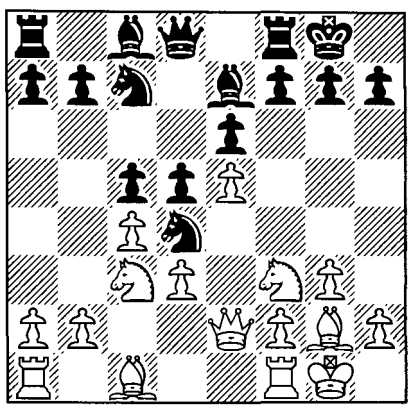
a2) 12...♗b7 13 d4! works well:



a21) 13...cxd4 14 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♕d7 (15...bxc4 16 bxc4 can only favour White as he'll gain time on b7) 16 cxd5 exd5 (16...♘xd5 17 ♗h6! is a neat tactic: 17...gxh6 18 ♕g4+ ♔h8 19 ♘xd5, exploiting the fact that the black queen is undefended) 17 ♗b2 and White has a pleasant advantage: he can continue putting pressure on the d5-pawn, while the g2 bishop is far stronger than its adversary on b7.

a22) 13...b4 14 ♘a4 cxd4 15 ♘xd4 ♕e8 (15...♘xd4 16 ♖xd4 ♗c6 17 ♘b2 also favours White; Black's pieces are the more passive and White can even think of returning to his kingside attack with ♕g4 and ♗h6 or ♕h5 and ♖g4) 16 ♗b2 ♖d8 17 ♖ac1 a5 was C.Marcelin-J.Maiwald, German League 2009, and here 18 ♘b5! ♘xb5 19 cxb5 ♘b8 20 ♗d4 would have given White an almost decisive advantage. Just look at how passive Black's pieces are: the queen, bishop and knight have no squares which means he cannot develop his f8-rook either.

b) 10...♘d4 is a critical try:

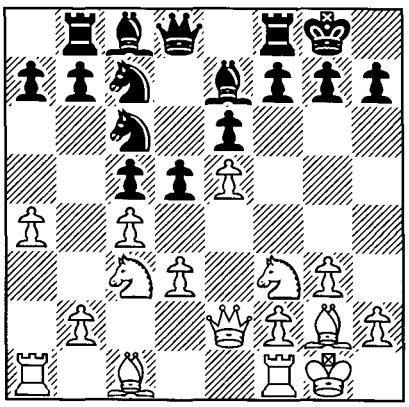


11 ♘xd4 (11 ♕d1!? isn't as ridiculous as it looks; now 12 ♘xd4 is threatened and so Black's best is probably 11...♘c6, giving White the decision on how the game should proceed) 11...cxd4 12 ♘b1 b5 (12...dxc4 also favours White: 13 dxc4 d3 14 ♕d2! ♘a6 15 ♖d1 ♘b4 16 a3 and the d3-pawn drops) 13 cxd5 ♘xd5 14 ♘d2 (14 ♕g4

would win a pawn immediately due to the double threat of 15 ♗h6 and 15 ♕xd4, but might allow Black some counterplay) 14...♗b7 was seen in L.McShane-K.Bischoff, Kuppenheim 2003. Now I'd win the d4-pawn with 15 ♕g4 ♕b6 16 ♘b3.

After 10..♖b8, White has tried several moves. Generally he can either prevent Black's counterplay with ...b7-b5 or else ignore it and continue with his development. I have given a few alternative plans for White showing how to tackle this position.

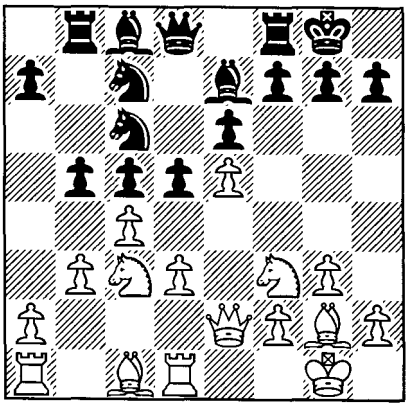
11 a4



This is White's most common choice. He prevents Black's ...b7-b5, but it is very committal ceding the b4-outpost. Indeed, it's unclear whether this is a good trade off for White. The alternatives are:

a) 11 ♗f4 would calmly develop and allow Black to open the queenside with 11...b5, but is also playable: 12 ♖fd1 g5? (a bad lapse) 13 ♘xg5! ♗xg5 14 ♕g4 h6 15 h4 (regaining the piece and leaving Black's king wide open) 15...b4 16 hxg5 h5 17 ♕xh5 bxc3 18 ♗e4! (very pretty) 18...dxe4 19 g6 ♕h4 20 gxh4 fxg6 21 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 22 ♕h5+ ♔g8 23 ♔h2 1-0, A.Rustemov-G.Baranov, Krasnodar 1998.

b) 11 ♖d1 is a logical move, dissuading Black from opening up the position with ...dxc4. We should remember that when Black plays ...♘f6-e8-c7, we should play ♖fd1, compared to ...♘f6-d7 when ♖fe1 should be preferred. This is because it is not necessary to support the e5-pawn when Black hasn't put any further pressure on it. Now 11...b5 12 b3 leads to:



b1) 12...b4 is illogical. Black wants to open up the queenside for his pieces, not close it, and after 13 ♘a4 he'll always have to keep an eye on c5 while White can return to attacking on the kingside.

b2) 12...f5!? is interesting and again makes sense of the knight on c7. After 13 cxd5 exd5 (or 13...♘xd5 14 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 15 d4 cxd4 – 15...♕e4 16 ♕f1! would leave Black in awkward straits – and here I like 16 ♕b2! followed by 17 ♘xd4 with an edge, due to the holes in Black's structure) 14 d4 Black can try:

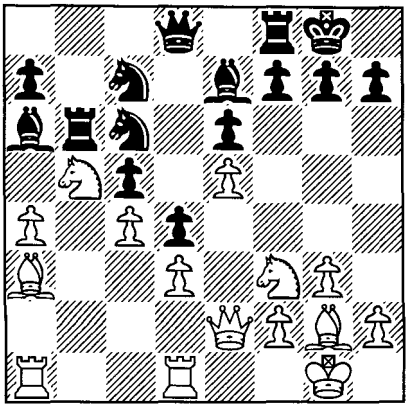
b21) 14...b4 15 ♘a4 ♗a6 16 ♕c2 leaves White with a slight edge.

b22) 14...c4 15 a3!? cxb3 16 ♕b2 ♘a5 17 ♘e1 is unclear, but I like the available squares for the white knights.

b23) 14...♗a6 15 ♕e3 ♘e6 was tried in L.Psakhis-A.Strikovic, Yerevan Olympiad 1996, and here 16 dxc5 would promise White the better chances in all lines: 16...♗xc5 (16...d4 17 ♕e2 ♗xc5 18 a3!

transposes) 17 ♕e2 d4 is given as unclear by Psakhis in the notes to the game, but 18 a3! ♕d7 19 b4, blocking in the bishop on a6, gives White the advantage.

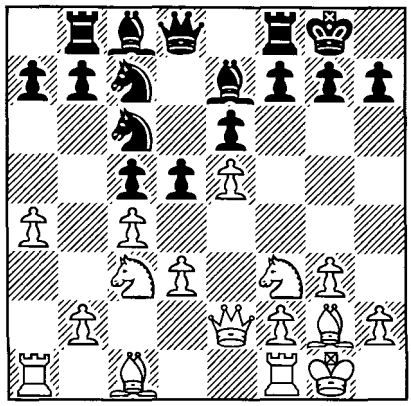
b3) 12...♗a6 13 a4! (I like this move; not only does it force Black to take on c4 immediately, it also allows White to use the b5-square to block up Black's queenside play) 13...bxc4 14 bxc4 ♖b4?! (this move loses time, but it's already difficult to come up with a plan for Black; 14...♗b7 is the computer's top suggestion, but a difficult move to play as Black has no real threat, and at this point we could take the b-file ourselves with 15 ♖b1 h6 16 ♗a3 d4 17 ♘e4, with the better chances) 15 ♗a3 ♖b6 16 ♘b5 d4?! is an instructive mistake.



This move can never really be recommended, but it's likely that many of your opponents will feel obliged to close the centre due to the pressure on d5. If he does not play ...d5-d4, Black will constantly have to investigate what will happen after the exchange. Therefore your opponents may become tired and just want to cut out that opportunity! After ...d5-d4 has been played, however, White has a clear advantage as he can utilize the e4-square to target the weak c5-pawn, while the bishop on g2 has become very powerful.

G.Jones-S.Knott, British League 2003, concluded 17 ♘d2 ♗xb5 18 cxb5!? (18 axb5 is also very good for White) 18...♘a5 19 ♘c4 ♘xc4 20 dxc4 (the knight on c7 is totally dominated and he must simply sit still, while White's bishop-pair and queenside pawns promise him a great advantage; I leave the rest of my game to show how White can progress) 20...f5 21 a5 ♖b8 22 ♕f3 ♕d7 23 ♖ab1 ♖fd8 24 ♖b3 g6 25 ♕d3 ♗f8 26 ♖a1 ♕g7 27 ♗c1 h6 28 ♗d2 ♔h7 29 ♖ab1 ♔g8 30 b6 axb6 31 ♖xb6 ♖xb6 32 axb6 ♘a6 33 b7 ♘b4 34 ♕a3 ♖b8 35 ♕a8 ♕c7 36 ♖a1 ♗g7 37 f4 ♔f7 38 ♕xb8 ♕xb8 39 ♖a8 ♘a6 40 ♖xa6 ♗xe5 41 fxe5 1-0.

Returning to the committal 11 a4:



11...a6

Again there are alternatives:

a) 11...♘b4 12 ♖d1 gets ready to open up the position with d3-d4 so Black felt obliged to play 12...d4, but 13 ♘e4 f5?! (understandably Black wants counterplay, but this creates further weaknesses) 14 exf6 gxf6 15 ♗h6 ♖f7 16 ♗h3 ♘c6 17 ♗g4!? ♗f8 (17...f5 18 ♗h5 fxe4 19 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 20 ♕xe4 gives White a huge attack, as 20...♕g8 21 ♗f4! ♗d8 22 ♗d6 is terrible) 18 ♕d2 ♗xh6 19 ♕xh6 b6 20 ♗h5 gave White a promising position in E.Shaposhnikov-A.Bellaiche, Moscow 2004.

b) 11...b6 looks like the critical test of White's plan. Black endeavours to break with ...b5, but he doesn't want to allow the game continuation. The plan is slow, however, and allows White to get on with his kingside plan: 12 h4 a6 13 ♗f4 b5 14 axb5 axb5 15 b3 bxc4 16 bxc4 ♘d4 17 ♕d1 dxc4 18 dxc4 ♗a6 19 ♘d2 ♖b4 was D.Ledger-M.Twyble, London 1998, and now 20 ♕g4 gives White a promising initiative.

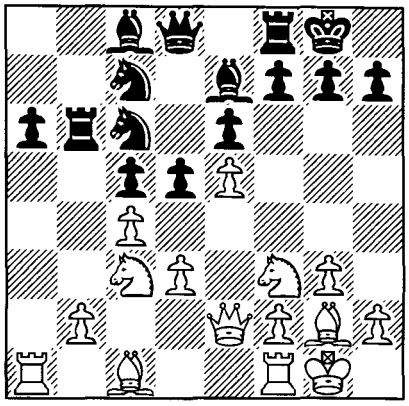
12 a5!

A common idea in Benoni set-ups, which we can borrow here. The pawn on c4 will now remain for good.

12...b5

Otherwise Black will really struggle for counterplay.

13 axb6 ♖xb6



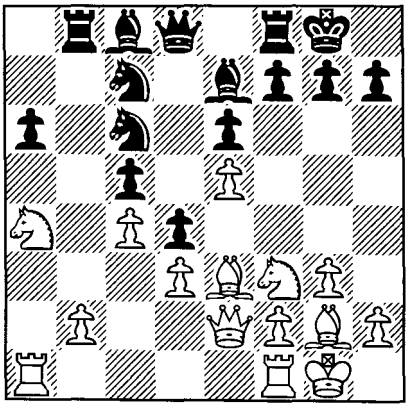
Black has succeeded in half-opening the b-file, but now has a structural weakness. Note that the c5-pawn is a greater weakness than a6, as it is easier to attack for White. Moreover, Black's knights are placed very badly; they cannot support the c5-pawn and get in the way of his other pieces.

14 ♘a4

14 h4 also led to a promising opening for White after 14...a5 15 ♘a4 ♖b8 16 ♗e3 ♘a6 (16...d4 is a move we are always trying to provoke, but here it was necessary) 17 cxd5! exd5 18 ♖ac1 d4 in S.Galdunts-V.Chuchelov, Cappelle la Grande 2001, when instead of 19 ♗g5, I'd prefer 19 ♗f4 as the knight belongs on g5, to target both h7 and threaten e6 when our kingside attack has really picked up some steam.

14...♖b4

After 14...♖b8 15 ♗e3 d4 the diagonal has now been opened up for the g2-archbishop, c5 will be a permanent weakness and e4 is a strong square for a white knight:



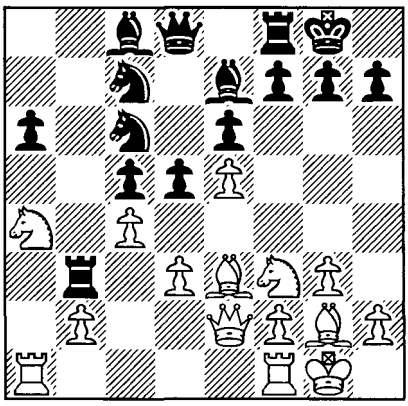
a) 16 ♗f4 ♘b4 17 h4 ♗b7 18 ♘g5 ♗xg2 19 ♔xg2 ♕c8 20 ♘e4 ♘e8 21 h5 h6 was D.Solak-Z.Ribli, Murska Sobota 2007, when I would delay the g3-g4 break and first prevent Black getting any counterplay with ...f7-f5. Indeed, 22 ♖h1 ♕c6 23 ♕f3 ♕c7 24 b3 a5 25 g4 ♘a6 26 ♖ab1 ♘b4 27 ♖bg1 ♘a6 28 g5! hxg5 29 h6! looks very promising.

b) 16 ♗g5!? is an interesting tactic: 16...f6 (16...♗xg5 was required, but 17 ♘xg5 ♕xg5 18 ♗xc6 ♕e7 is a little better for White as Black is doomed to passivity) 17 exf6 gxf6 18 ♗h6 ♖f7 19 ♘d2 ♘e5 20 ♘e4 ♘d7 21 ♕h5 e5 was P.Girinath-M.Perunovic, Dubai 2009, when 22 ♗h3! picks up the pawn on c5 and leaves White with a wonderful position.

15 ♗d2 ♖b3?!

Pseudo-activity which doesn't help Black. Being able to defend passively is one of the most difficult things in chess.

16 ♗e3



Black does not have a good way to defend the pawn.

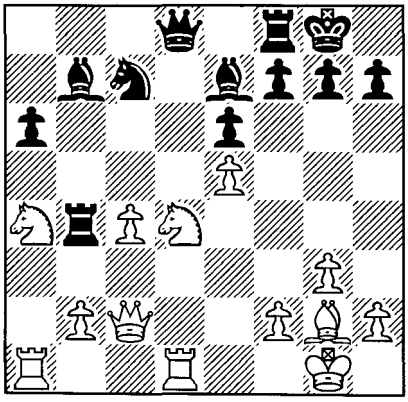
16...dxc4

16...d4 17 ♘d2! exploits Black's 15th move and wins material.

17 dxc4 ♘d4 18 ♗xd4

18 ♘xd4 cxd4 19 ♖fd1 d3 20 ♕f1 and the d-pawn falls within the next couple of moves would be more accurate than the game continuation, as our dark-squared bishop is stronger than the knight.

18...cxd4 19 ♕c2 ♖b4 20 ♖fd1 ♗b7 21 ♘xd4



So White picks up the pawn anyway and has a clear, probably decisive advantage. The experienced English Grandmaster ultimately converts.

21...♗xg2 22 ♔xg2 ♕a8+ 23 ♔g1 ♖fb8 24 b3 f6 25 exf6

25 ♕e2! is more accurate, not letting Black have a sniff of counterplay.

25...♗xf6 26 ♖ab1

26 ♘c5! looks very strong for White, but requires accurate calculation: 26...♕a7 27 ♘d3 ♗xd4 28 ♘xb4 ♖xb4 29 ♕d2 ♗xa1 30 ♕xb4 ♗d4 31 ♖xd4! ♕xd4 32 ♕b8+ ♔f7 33 ♕xc7+ should by now be straightforward to convert.

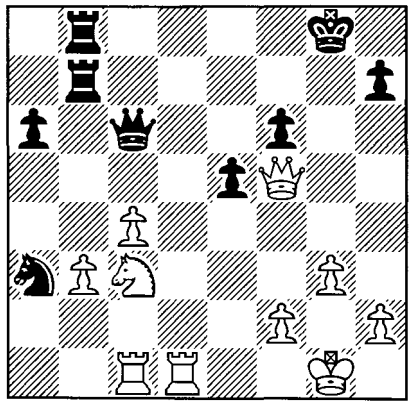
26...e5

26...♘b5! was Black's last chance, although after 27 ♘xb5 axb5 28 ♘c5 bxc4 29 bxc4 ♕c6 30 ♘e4 ♖xb1 31 ♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 32 ♕xb1 White keeps his pawn advantage as 32...♕xc4?? 33 ♕b8+ ♔f7 34 ♘d6+ drops the queen.

27 ♘e2

27 ♘f5 looks like a stronger circuit for the knight.

27...♕f3 28 ♘c5 ♕c6 29 ♘e4 ♘b5 30 ♘xf6+ gxf6 31 ♕f5 ♘a3 32 ♖bc1 ♖4b7 33 ♘c3 1-0

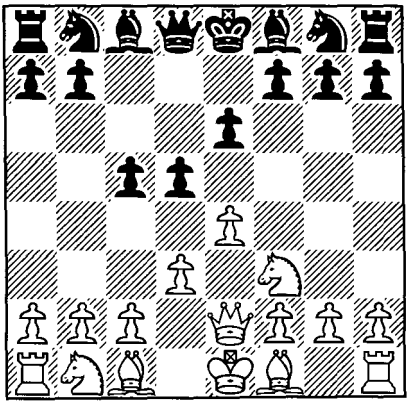


A definite opening success for White. I've given a few different options for White in the notes, but the plans are very similar

and it's up to personal taste which one you adopt. In general, I think the positions are easier for White to play as we have more space once we've played e4-e5 and c2-c4. We always have our kingside play to fall back upon, whereas Black has to force things on the queenside or he'll be forced to go passive for the entire game. However, as we have seen, a slightly desperate bid for counterplay often backfires.

Game 62
G.Jones-S.Yudin
World U18 Championship, Heraklion 2004

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 d5 4 ♕e2



It's nigh on impossible to cover all of Black's possibilities, but I'll try and look at all his major options. It makes it easier that our plans are very similar against all of Black's set-ups. We want to play e4-e5 to gain space and if possible follow it up with c4. It's important to keep Black passive.

4...♘f6 5 g3 ♘c6

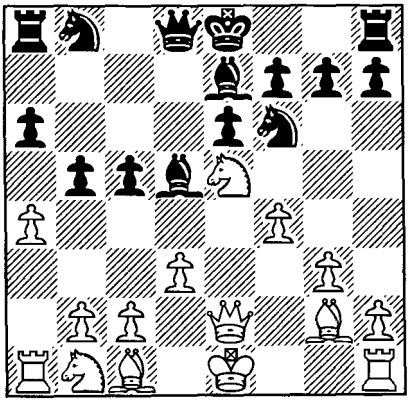
By no means forced:

a) 5...c4 has only been played once in my database, but should be checked: 6 exd5 (6 e5 cxd3 7 cxd3 ♘fd7 8 d4 looks a reasonable choice too) 6...cxd3 7 ♕xd3 ♕xd5 was played in G.Cabrilo-D.Rajkovic, Herceg Novi 2001, when rather than meekly exchanging queens, 8 ♘c3 would give White a small edge with his advantage in development.

b) 5...♗e7 6 ♗g2 ♘c6 just transposes back to the main line, but Black has a couple of alternatives:

b1) 6...0-0 7 e5 (7 0-0 would give Black the additional option of 7...b5, although here too we could try 8 ♘e5!?) 7...♘fd7 8 c4 and I can't see any sensible way to avoid playing 8...♘c6 when we'll transpose back into our main line after 9 0-0.

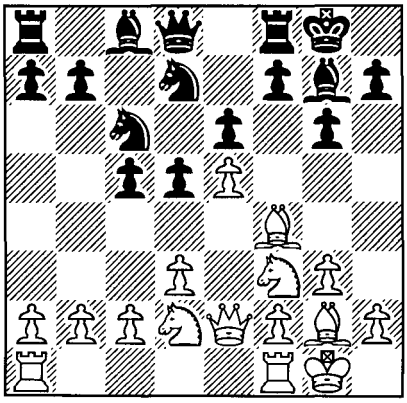
b2) 6...b5 7 ♘e5!? doesn't seem to have been played before, but looks like an interesting attempt at exploiting Black's delaying of ...♘c6 (instead 7 0-0 looks like it will transpose to 7...b5): 7...♗b7 8 a4 a6 (8...b4 9 exd5 exd5 10 ♗f4 is probably only level, but I'd prefer to play White as we can attempt to use the c4-square and apply pressure down the long diagonal) 9 exd5 ♗xd5 10 f4! reaches a position that looks more like a Grand Prix Attack than a King's Indian Attack!



Here White's strong knight on e5 and better structure, especially after Black is obliged to play 10...b4, must give him something.

c) 5...g6 is a strange mix of variations – if the knight were on e7 it would resemble the games seen later in the chapter. Here:

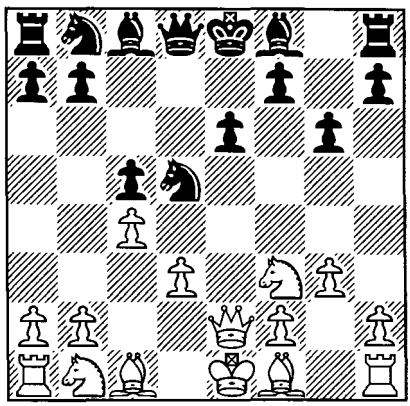
c1) 6 ♗g2 ♗g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 e5 ♘fd7 9 ♗f4 (it's desperately important to support the e5-pawn as Black has his g7 bishop attacking it too) 9...♘c6 10 ♘bd2 and now:



c11) 10...f6 (as we've seen before, this thrust creates holes on the dark squares in Black's position, but otherwise the bishop will be trapped on g7 for the rest of the game) 11 exf6 ♕xf6 12 ♗d6 ♖f7 13 c4! b6 14 ♖ae1 (the e6-pawn is very difficult to defend, although 14 h4!? also looks interesting with the idea of 15 ♘g5) 14...♗b7 (14...♘f8 would cede the e5-square which is disastrous: 15 ♘e5 ♘xe5 16 cxd5! exd5 17 ♗xe5 ♕c6 18 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 19 ♘e4! ♗b7 20 ♘c3 ♖d8 21 f4! and his king's safety will provide a huge headache for the second player) 15 ♕xe6 ♕xe6? (15...♘b4 was necessary, to try and complicate the issue, although White is on top after 16 ♗h3!) 16 ♖xe6 ♗xb2 was S.Zavgorodniy-N.Vitiugov, Chalkidiki 2001, when 17 ♘g5! was the best way to pick up a pawn with a great position.

c12) 10...h6 11 h4 f6 12 exf6 ♘xf6 (12...♕xf6 is similar to our last variation, but the insertion of h4 and ...h6 should help White as Black's king may become even more vulnerable) 13 ♘e5 ♘d4 14 ♕d1 saw White starting to take complete control over the position, so Black attempted to make it murky with 14...♘h5!? (or 14...♔h7 15 c3 ♘c6 16 ♘xc6 bxc6 17 ♘b3 and White can start to pick off Black's weak pawns) 15 ♘xg6 ♘xf4 16 ♘xf4 ♖xf4 17 gxf4 ♗d7 (17...♕xh4 18 c3 ♘c6 19 ♕f3 doesn't look anything like enough for the exchange to me) 18 c3 ♘f5 19 ♘f3 and White successfully converted his extra material in Zhang Zhong-V.Epishin, Linares 2001.

c2) 6 exd5!? ♘xd5 (6...♗e7!? 7 dxe6 ♗xe6 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0 ♘c6 gives Black some compensation for the pawn, but not quite enough) 7 c4 looks very interesting.

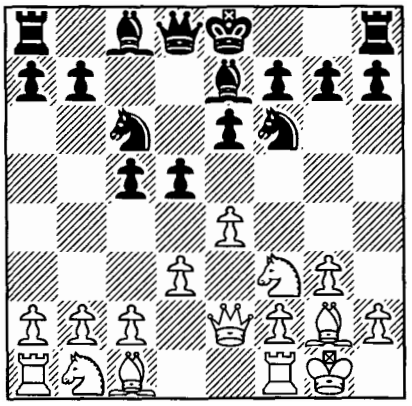


We weaken the d3-pawn, but Black's light-squared bishop is blocked in, so there's no clear way to exploit it. In the meantime we can use our development advantage to good effect. The game might continue 7...♘f6 (or 7...♘e7 8 ♗g2 ♘bc6 9 0-0 ♗g7 10 ♘c3 0-0 11 ♗f4 and I'd prefer White as Black has yet to develop his queenside) 8 ♗g2 ♘c6 9 0-0 ♗g7 10 ♗e3 ♕d6 (10...b6 11 d4! is very strong) 11 ♘c3 0-0 12 ♗f4 when White has more space and is ahead in development. I wonder if anyone will follow this suggestion, especially if

this hybrid plan for Black garners further interest.

Returning to 5...♘c6:

6 ♗g2 ♗e7 7 0-0



7...♕c7?!

An odd choice by my strong Russian opponent. I presume his thinking ran as follows: White's plan is to play e5. Therefore I'll play another piece controlling that square and after 8 e5 ♘d7 the pawn is already under fire. Unfortunately his thinking has a flaw. Black has tried many moves here other than 7...0-0 which we have already examined:

a) 7...d4 8 e5 ♘d5 9 c4 would be fairly typical and again we should be happy that Black has played such an early ...d4.

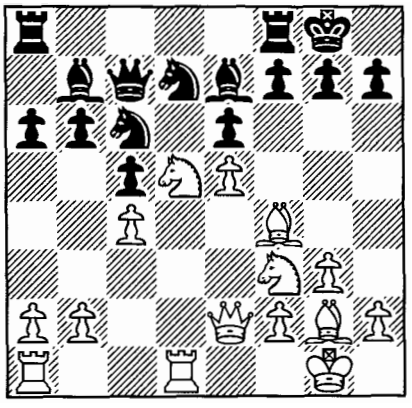
b) 7...a5 does not prevent our plan either and after the simple 8 e5 ♘d7 9 c4 d4 10 ♘a3! (exploiting that b5-outpost which Black so kindly gave us on move 7) 10...h6 11 ♘b5 a4 12 h4 ♘a7 13 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 14 exd6 ♘c6 15 ♗f4 ♘f6 16 ♘e5 White was dominating, A.Onischuk-H.Vatter, Fuerth 1998.

c) 7...b6 is probably the most important alternative, as it is the prelude to Black's plan of castling queenside, when our play is quite different to the other lines. Play is likely to transpose to our next game, Roiz-Stella, after 8 ♖e1, but we can also try 8 e5 ♘d7 9 c4. Now:

c1) As we have observed before, the capture 9...dxc4?! favours White. We will gain control of the d-file and can utilize the e4-square for our knight. Here 10 dxc4 ♗b7 11 ♘c3 a6 (11...♕b8 has also been played when 12 ♖d1! looks like an improvement to stop Black castling, as 12...♘cxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♗xb7 simply loses a piece) 12 ♖d1 ♕c7 13 ♗f4 threatens ♘d5 which Black has to allow or he'll lose yet further time:

c11) 13...0-0-0 14 ♘d5! exd5 15 cxd5 has surprisingly been played twice by strong players, but Black's in a lot of trouble here: 15...♘b4 (giving back the piece with 15...♘cxe5 16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 17 ♗xe5 ♗d6 18 ♗xg7 left White a clear pawn up in A.Strikovic-V.Moskalenko, Mesa 1992) 16 d6 ♗xd6 17 ♖xd6 ♘f8 18 ♗h3+ ♘e6 19 ♘g5 ♖xd6 20 exd6 ♕c6 21 f3 ♔b8 22 ♗xe6 fxe6 23 ♘f7 was totally winning in V.Chekhov-M.Krasenkow, Lubniewice 1994.

c12) 13...0-0 14 ♘d5!, with a further divide:



c121) 14...exd5 15 e6! ♗d6 16 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 17 ♖xd5! ♘d4 (17...♕xe6 18 ♕xe6 fxe6 19 ♖xd7 is of course great for White) 18 ♘xd4 ♗xd5 19 ♗xd5 cxd4 20 exf7+ ♔h8 21 ♗xa8 ♘f6 22 ♕f3 ♖xf7 23 ♖d1 and the

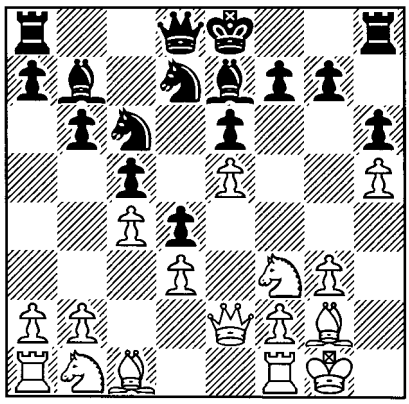
complications had resulted in a clear extra pawn for White, A.Morozevich-D.Sermek, Moscow Olympiad 1994.

c122) 14...♕c8 15 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 gives White a comfortable advantage, since Black will miss his dark-squared bishop when we start attacking his king, S.Belkhodja-P.Velikov, St Lorrain 2000.

c2) If Black does not want to commit in the centre, then he should try 9...♘f8 here, but this looks too slow to me. One game continued 10 h4 ♗b7 11 ♖d1 ♕d7 (11...d4 might be sensible, but then Black's knight looks stupid on f8) 12 ♘c3 (12 d4!? looks interesting, opening up the centre while Black's pieces are not well prepared) 12...♖c8 was S.Martinovic-P.Velikov, Pamporovo 1982, when 13 ♗g5! would have put Black under a lot of pressure. The basic threat is exchanging bishops followed by ♘b5-d6.

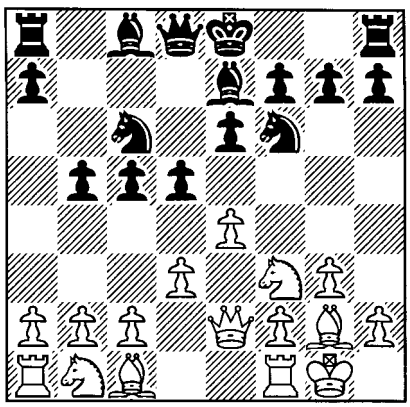
c3) 9...♗b7?! allows White to open up the position with 10 cxd5! exd5 11 e6 fxe6 12 ♕xe6 when White has better chances with Black's king stuck in the middle. The d5-pawn may also become a problem.

c4) After 9...d4 10 h4 (Psakhis suggests 10 ♘fd2!? followed by 11 f4 which is certainly an interesting option) 10...h6 11 h5 ♗b7 another typical position has arisen.



If we compare it with our main line position, we can establish a few differences. In Black's favour, he has managed to fianchetto his bishop already and hasn't committed his king. This means that our plan of locating all our minor pieces on the kingside and looking for a sacrificial breakthrough won't work. However, let's move on to the positives: Black's move order has forced him to play an immediate ...d5-d4, taking all the pressure off the c4-pawn and the d4 outpost away from his knight, while allowing us the e4-square for ours. After 12 ♘bd2 (12 ♗f4 has also been played, but I would prefer to delay it here; as Black is not obliged to castle kingside, he can generate counterplay with ...g7-g5, which here would gain time on our bishop; instead 12 ♖e1 would transpose directly to Roiz-Stella) 12...♕c7 13 ♖e1 and the position resembles Roiz-Stella, seen in the next game.

d) 7...b5 prevents our c2-c4 idea so normally the pawn just goes as far as c3, with potential threats of d3-d4.



White has played many different moves here, but I decided we should play in the same style as against Black's other tries:

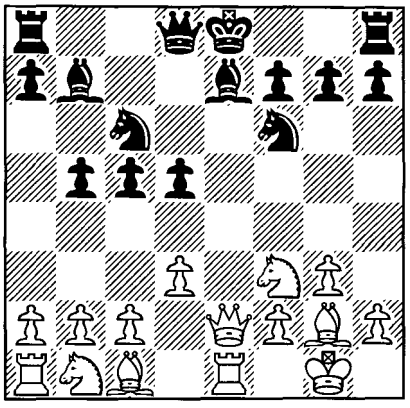
d1) An independent try to exploit Black's previous move by changing the style of play completely with 8 exd5!? exd5 was seen in M.Paragua-Zhang Zhong, Beijing (blitz)

2008. However, here instead of 9 a4 which seems illogical to me, I think White should try 9 d4 with one possible variation running 9...c4 10 ♘e5! ♘xd4 11 ♕d1 ♘f5 12 ♘c3 ♗e6 13 ♘c6 ♕d7 14 ♘xe7 ♘xe7 15 ♗g5 0-0 16 ♗xf6 gxf6 17 ♕d4 ♔g7 18 ♖ad1, with reasonable play for the pawn.

d2) 8 ♖e1, provoking Black into castling so we have a point of attack, looks logical. Now:

d21) 8...b4 9 a3 a5 10 exd5 exd5 11 axb4 cxb4 12 ♗e3 0-0 13 ♘bd2 ♖e8 14 ♘b3 ♗d7 15 ♕d2 ♗f8 16 ♘bd4 is more comfortable for White with his better pawn structure and good outpost on d4, Zhang Zhong-J.Benjamin, Seattle 2001.

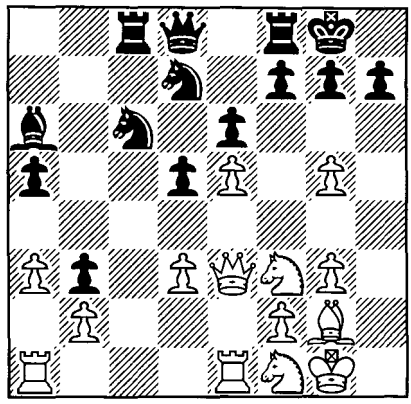
d22) 8...♗b7 is a sensible waiting move, but now we should definitely try to exploit Black's king still being in the centre with 9 exd5 exd5 and then:



d221) 10 d4 c4 11 a3!? (to prevent 11...b4) 11...0-0 12 ♘c3 a6 13 ♕d1!? with ideas of either ♘e5 or ♘h4. We'll develop the bishop to g5 and put pressure on Black's vulnerable d5-pawn.

d222) 10 c4!? attempts to weaken the c5-pawn: 10...b4 (or 10...bxc4 11 dxc4 0-0 12 cxd5 ♘xd5 13 ♘c3 ♘xc3 14 bxc3 ♗f6 15 ♕c2 and White maintains an advantage as the c5-pawn is more vulnerable than ours on c3; the b7-bishop is also loose which is especially pronounced following 15...♘b4? 16 cxb4 ♗xa1 17 ♘g5! when we win material with the double threats on h7 and b7) 11 cxd5!? ♘xd5 12 ♘bd2 0-0 13 ♘c4 when our knight ensures that d3 won't become too weak and so we can start to put pressure on the c5-pawn.

d23) 8...0-0 9 ♘bd2 (we shouldn't worry too much about move order here; 9 e5 and 9 c3 have also been played just as frequently, but we are going to play all three moves followed by pressing on the kingside with a typical style of play that we have already seen) 9...b4 10 e5 ♘d7 11 ♘f1 a5 12 h4 ♗a6 13 ♗g5 (the reason behind delaying the development of our bishop; now we can go to g5 in one go) 13...c4 14 ♕e3 cxd3 15 cxd3 b3 16 a3 ♗xg5 17 hxg5! (we always recapture this way as now we bind Black down and we have ideas of sacrificing the knight on f6 after ♘h2-g4, as well as of playing down the semi-open h-file) 17...♖c8 was I.Smirin-I.Popov, Plovdiv 2008.



Now I think 18 d4 is correct, cutting out ...d5-d4, when I like our chances.

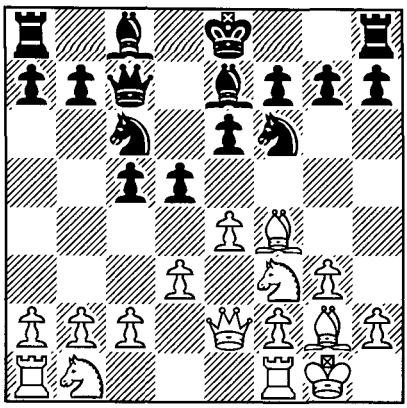
e) 7...h6 looks ridiculous, but is actually quite interesting. Black's aim is to play a quick ...g7-g5 and is targeted against our typical plan. Here 8 ♖e1 is a useful waiting

move when 8...g5?! is too early as we can open up the centre with 9 exd5! exd5 10 ♘e5 ♗e6 11 ♘xc6 bxc6, as in A.Dgebuadze-J.Blackburn, Liverpool 2008, when I like 12 c4, fixing Black's weaknesses. We can continue with ♘c3, b3, ♘a4 and ♗a3 with an extremely good game.

f) Trading in the centre with 7...dxe4 doesn't equalize either: 8 dxe4 e5 (otherwise we play e4-e5 ourselves, followed by c2-c4, reaching positions that resemble the ...dxc4 lines) 9 c3 (White is better here as he can utilize the d5-square, but the same cannot be said for Black as we're covering d4) 9...h6 10 ♘a3 ♗e6 11 ♘c4 ♕c7 12 ♘h4 0-0 13 f4!? (13 ♘f5 looks logical too) 13...exf4?! 14 ♗xf4 ♗xc4 15 ♕xc4 was already very good for White, but 15...♘e5? 16 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 17 ♘g6 b5 18 ♕xf7+ and 1-0 was all very easy in J.Magem Badals-P.San Segundo Carrillo, Cala Galdana 1999.

Back to Yudin's 7...♕c7!

8 ♗f4!

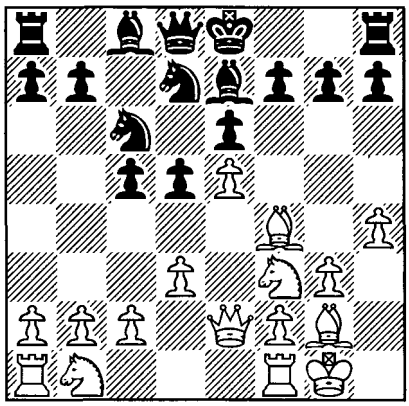


8...♕d8

A sign something's gone wrong. White has been given two free tempi as the bishop wants to sit on f4 to support the e5-pawn anyway.

Instead 8...e5 9 exd5 exf4 10 dxc6 is not a palatable option, while 8...♕b6 9 c4! followed by e4-e5 will look like our typical setup and with the queen misplaced on b6.

9 e5 ♘d7 10 h4!



Cutting out ...g7-g5 which is an important source of counterplay for Black.

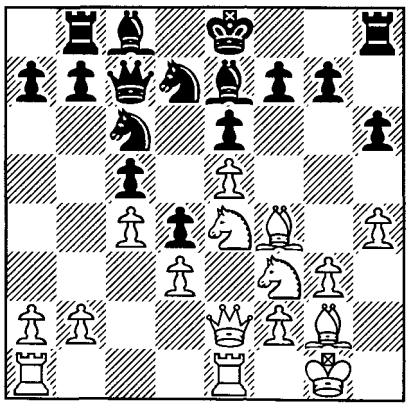
10...♕c7

And the queen returns to c7! It's clear Yudin is trying to play without committing any of his pieces, in particular keeping the king in the centre to prevent White's kingside initiative, but White has more useful waiting moves than Black.

11 c4 d4 12 ♘bd2 ♖b8

So the king isn't going queenside, but it's clear this is a very good version of the lines we looked at in Glek-Wyss.

13 ♖fe1 h6 14 ♘e4



14...b5

The pawn is of course taboo: 14...♘dxe5 15 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 16 ♕h5 picks up a piece.

Instead 14...0-0 is extremely scary, castling into the jaws of death. I'd consider an immediate 15 ♘f6+! gxf6 (15...♔h8 16 ♘g5! is also very strong, as all the knights are poisoned!) 16 exf6 ♗d6 17 ♘xd4! and Black is forced to give up his queen with 17...♘xf6 18 ♘b5 ♗xf4 19 ♘xc7 ♘d4 when White should still be better, after either moving the queen or even the interesting 20 gxf4!? ♘xe2+ 21 ♖xe2 when we're a pawn to the good.

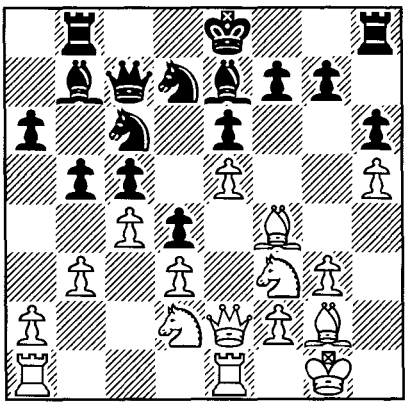
15 b3

I decided to keep Black's play under wraps, although 15 cxb5 ♖xb5 16 ♘d6+ would have promised me a decent edge: 16...♗xd6 17 exd6 ♕b7 18 ♘d2! 0-0 (or 18...♖xb2 19 ♕g4 when the b2-pawn is irrelevant, but the attack on the kingside and down the long diagonal is going to decide) 19 ♘c4 is great for White.

15...a6 16 h5

Continuing my plan of slowly improving my position, but again I could have struck with 16 ♘d6+.

16...♗b7 17 ♘ed2!?



An interesting plan; I decided that g4 was a better square for the knight with a potential sacrifice ideas on h6 once Black castles.

17...bxc4

The computer still wants to castle – it has no fear! However, after 17...0-0 I would consider replacing that knight back on e4, as e5 is still poisoned: 18 ♘e4!? ♘dxe5 19 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 20 ♘xc5 and White will in fact pick up material with a comfortable advantage, since 20...♕xc5 21 ♗xe5 ♗d6 22 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 23 ♕e4 wins the d4-pawn.

18 bxc4 ♘b4 19 ♘f1 ♘b6 20 a3 ♘c6 21 ♖ab1 ♘a4 22 ♕c2 ♘c3

Visually at least, Black has made some progress, but the knight is now trapped on c3. With the opening of the b-file I decided to double up my rooks.

23 ♖b2 ♕d7

Black needs his rook in the game, so for better or worse he had to castle.

24 ♘1d2 0-0

Black finally castles in order to contest the queenside.

25 ♘b1 ♗d8

Alternatively:

a) 25...♘xb1 26 ♖exb1 is a little better for White.

b) 25...♗a8! would have allowed Black to equalize: 26 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 27 ♘xc3 dxc3 28 ♕xc3 ♘d4 29 ♘xd4 (29 ♘d2 ♗xg2 30 ♔xg2 ♕c6+ gives Black good play for the pawn) 29...cxd4 30 ♕a1 ♗xg2 31 ♔xg2 ♕b7+ and Black's play is worth a pawn.

26 ♗d2

Forcing Black to take on b1.

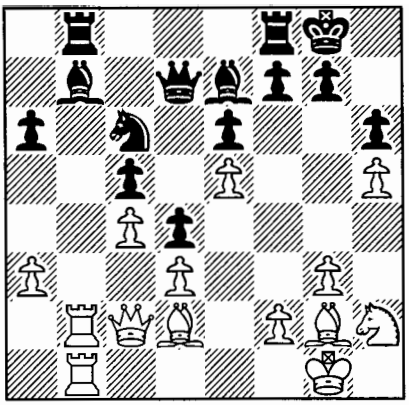
26...♘xb1 27 ♖exb1

So I've succeeded in gaining the b-file and Black is again under unpleasant pressure.

27...♗e7 28 ♘h2!

This move has two purposes: it unleashes the power of the g2-bishop and increases the pressure on the b7-bishop.

The other idea is to play the knight to g4 from where it can either sacrifice itself on h6 or support a bishop sacrifice there.



28...♕c7 29 ♕a4!

Threatening to take on b7, so Black's next is forced.

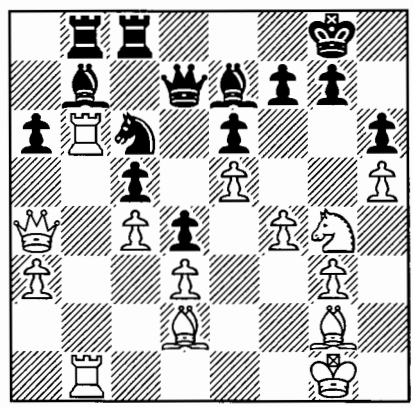
29...♖fc8 30 ♘g4

30 ♘f1!? is also interesting, with the idea of rerouting the knight to e4 after ♗f4 while Black can do nothing but wait.

30...♗f8 31 ♖b6 ♗e7 32 f4

32 ♖1b2! would have brought the pressure to boiling point, with the idea that 32...♗f8 allows 33 ♗xc6! ♗xc6 34 ♖xc6, picking up the piece. The point behind ♖b2 is that now rook takes rook isn't check.

32...♕d7?!



32...♗d8 was forced, but the position is still extremely unpleasant after the simple 33 ♖6b2.

33 ♕b3!

Picking up a piece.

33...♕e8 34 ♗xc6 1-0

Maybe White could have played more incisively with ♘d6+ at some point, but it's clear that the position was always much easier for White to play and it was very difficult to come up with any really constructive plan for Black.

Game 63
M.Roiz-A.Stella
Biel 2009

1 e4

The actual move order of this game was 1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 g3 b6 3 ♗g2 ♗b7 4 0-0 e6 5 d3 ♗e7 6 e4 d5 7 e5 ♘fd7 8 ♕e2 c5 9 ♖e1 ♘c6 10 c4 d4 11 h4, transposing to the game, but I decided to edit it to our more normal move order, thereby allowing me to have a look at the alternatives en route.

1...c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 d5

3...♘c6 4 g3 d5 5 ♕e2 b6 6 ♗g2 ♗b7 would just transpose to the game.

4 ♕e2

Here we will look at Black's set-up with a queenside fianchetto.

4...♘c6

4...♘f6 is rather similar and will be covered in the next game, Sergienko-Pasiev.

5 g3 b6

This is Black's quickest way to fianchetto on the queenside. Here he usually delays developing his kingside as he wants to castle long.

6 ♗g2 ♗b7 7 0-0 ♘f6 8 ♖e1 ♗e7 9 e5 ♘d7 10 c4 d4

Due to the pressure on d5, Black has

been forced to fix the centre. Therefore if he just castles kingside, we'll transpose to a good version of the lines we've previously looked at. Black's idea is to find activity on the kingside himself, and thus either leave his king in the centre or place it on the queenside.

11 h4

If Black's king is not forced to the kingside, then we should be very careful not to allow Black to gain space there. This is another topical position, which White should be ready for.

Instead 11 ♘bd2 g5! is not ideal: 12 h3 h5 13 g4 hxg4 14 hxg4 ♕c7 15 ♘f1 0-0-0 16 ♘g3 ♖dg8 17 a3 a5 18 ♗d2 ♔b8 19 b3 was seen in L.Psakhis-M.Illescas Cordoba, Madrid (rapid) 1988, when 19...♖h4! would have put White under a lot of pressure.

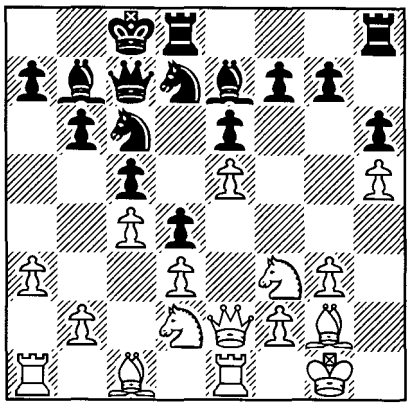
11...h6

Black gets ready to break on the kingside with ...g7-g5. The idea behind the quick queenside fianchetto is to castle long, so our typical aggressive intentions don't work. Fortunately we can switch our attack fairly easily to the queenside. In particular, the b-file is easy to open and the g2-bishop exerts strong pressure on the light queenside squares. Indeed, we have already seen how White can attack on the queenside in Jones-Yudin.

Here Black might also try:

a) 11...♕c7 is an important move to investigate. After 12 ♘bd2 (as Black is planning on breaking on the kingside, 12 ♗f4 isn't so logical as it will allow Black to gain a tempo on the bishop; 12 ♘a3 also seems possible, but I think it's more accurate to play this only after Black has castled queenside) 12...0-0-0 13 a3 h6 14 h5, as Black has castled queenside, the operations are reversed.

Indeed, our plan is to open up the a- and b-files with b2-b4. Now:



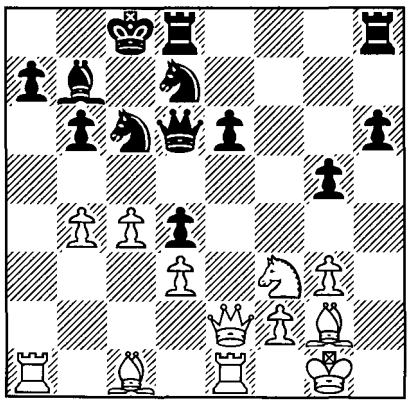
a1) 14...a5 is Black's main move, preventing our plan. Here 15 ♗h3! (an odd-looking move but the idea is to prevent, or at least delay, the ...g7-g5 break, as the e6-pawn would then be hanging) 15...♖dg8 (15...♔b8 was tried against me in a blitz game, but this allows 16 ♘e4! ♖dg8 when in G.Jones-M.Mosnegutu, Internet (blitz) 2010, I could have played 17 ♘d6! ♗xd6 18 exd6 ♕xd6 19 ♗f4 e5 20 ♘xe5 ♘cxe5 21 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 22 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 23 ♖xe5, leaving Black in a tough endgame where he is very passive) 16 ♘e4! leads to:

a11) Black can't swipe a free pawn with 16...♘dxe5 17 ♘xe5 ♘xe5, as 18 ♗f4 will regain at least the pawn. Note that here 17...♕xe5?? 18 ♗f4 traps the queen.

a12) 16...g6 17 hxg6 ♖xg6 18 ♗f4 h5 19 ♘fg5 (19 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 20 exd6 ♕d8 is very unclear) 19...♘d8 20 b4 (a typical sacrifice to open up Black's king for our rooks) 20...cxb4 21 axb4 ♗xb4 22 ♖eb1 ♘xe5 23 ♗g2 gives White good play for the pawn, but Black's next 23...♘dc6? allowed the winning 24 ♘xf7! ♖f8 25 c5! in A.Dreev-L.Janjgava, Simferopol 1988.

a2) The immediate 14...g5 is of course logical but probably premature. I think Black's attack works better if he can keep

the g-file open. I.Glek-E.De Haan, Dutch League 2000, continued 15 hxg6 fxg6 16 ♘e4 (16 ♗h3!? would highlight a downside of Black's aggression) 16...g5 17 b4 cxb4 18 ♘d6+! ♗xd6 19 exd6 ♕xd6 20 axb4.



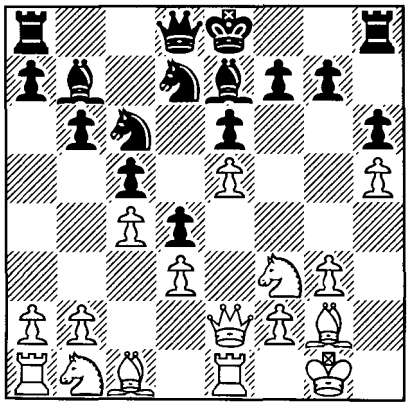
At the cost of a pawn White has opened up the position for his rook on a1 and the bishop-pair. Black's king's safety is looking decidedly dodgy and in the game he only lasted a few more moves: 20...e5 21 ♗a3 g4?! 22 b5! gxf3 23 ♗xd6 fxe2 24 bxc6 ♗xc6 25 ♗xc6 ♘c5 26 ♗xc5 1-0 .

a3) 14...♖dg8 also allows White to claim the better of it with 15 b4 g5 (15...cxb4 is very risky: 16 axb4 ♗xb4 17 ♗b2 and Black's extra pawn is dropping on d4) 16 b5!? ♘d8 17 ♘h2 (17 a4! looks even stronger) 17...♗xg2 18 ♔xg2 ♕b7+ 19 ♔g1 g4!? (otherwise 20 ♘g4 comes when Black has absolutely no counterplay, while we can push our a-pawn to open up his king) was seen in I.Glek-E.Kolesnikov, Sochi 2004. Here I don't really see why White didn't play 20 ♘xg4 ♖g5 21 ♘e4 ♖xh5 22 f4!? when Black's attack is not getting anywhere, as shown by 22...♖f5 23 a4 h5 24 ♘gf6.

b) Black has also tried playing with his king stuck in the middle with 11...a6 12 ♗f4 h6 13 h5 b5 14 ♘bd2 ♘b6 15 ♖ac1 ♕d7 but here, rather than the double-edged 16 g4 of S.Iuldashev-M.Saltaev, Tashkent 1992, I prefer 16 ♘e4 when Black has nowhere safe to place his king and has to watch out for the safety of the c5-pawn.

Finally, we can return to Stella's 11...h6:

12 h5



This move grabs more space on the kingside and dissuades the freeing move 12...g5.

12 ♘a3 has also often been played, but I prefer to keep the option of developing the knight to d2, especially as Black has not yet weakened the b5-square with ...a5.

12...g5?!

An aggressive try, but the problem is that White can open the queenside quickly when Black will have nowhere safe to place his king. Alternatives are:

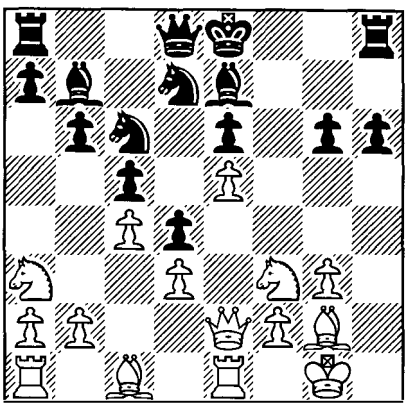
a) 12...♕c7 13 ♘bd2 transposes to note 'a' to Black's 11th move, above.

b) I think 12...a6 is inaccurate, as White isn't obliged to play ♘a3 anyway. After 13 ♘bd2 b5 (and this doesn't make sense at all; had Black wanted to play a position with ....b5 he could have done so earlier, and now it's not going to be so easy to find anywhere safe for the black monarch) 14 b3 a difficult position for Black to play has arisen. He has problems completing his development, since neither side of the board

is safe for his king, while White can continue improving his position. Here 14...b4 took all the pressure off White's position in A.Ivanov-V.Kiselev, Voronezh 2007, and here I'd play 15 ♘e4!?, as White has the better chances should Black capture the e5-pawn: 15...♘cxe5 16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 17 ♘xc5! ♗xg2 18 ♕xe5 ♗h3 19 ♗b2 and Black's d4-pawn is extremely vulnerable.

c) 12...♘f8 13 ♘bd2 ♕d7 14 ♘h2!? (the simple 14 ♘e4 also looks fine) 14...f5 (not forced, but otherwise White will successfully achieve 15 ♘g4) 15 exf6 gxf6 16 ♘df3 ♗d6 17 ♗h3 ♘d8 (17...0-0-0 should have been tried, although 18 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 19 ♕xe6 ♘b4 doesn't promise Black adequate compensation) 18 ♘h4 ♔f7 19 ♗d2 and White clearly had the upper hand, M.Markovic-J.Nikolac, Neum 2002.

13 hxg6 fxg6 14 ♘a3!



Now that Black has weakened his kingside it looks likely he will castle long. Therefore we should look at attacking on the queenside. With the text, we threaten to jump our knight into d6 via b5, so Black's next is forced.

14...a6 15 ♘c2

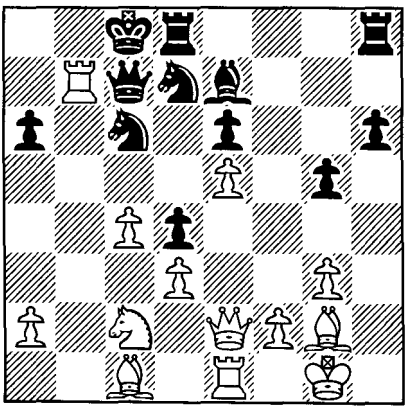
The knight is very useful here to aid the b2-b4 break.

15...♕c7 16 b4 g5 17 bxc5 bxc5 18 ♖b1

The queenside suddenly doesn't look so safe either for the black king.

18...♖b8

18...0-0-0 allows a great attack immediately with 19 ♘fxd4! cxd4 (19...♘xd4 doesn't help either, as after 20 ♘xd4 ♗xg2 21 ♘xe6 ♕c6 22 ♘xd8 ♖xd8 23 e6 ♘f6 24 ♗b2! the threat of 25 ♗e5 is decisive) 20 ♖xb7! and then:

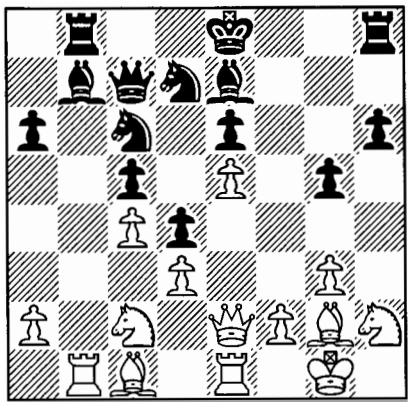


a) 20...♕xb7 21 ♘xd4 ♘db8 (the attempt to sacrifice the queen fails: 21...♘xd4 22 ♗xb7+ ♔xb7 23 ♕b2+ ♘b6 24 ♖e4 ♘f3+ 25 ♔g2 ♖xd3 26 ♗e3 ♘e1+ 27 ♔f1 and all of Black's pieces are dropping) 22 ♘xe6 and the three connected passed pawns plus great attack gives White more than enough compensation for the rook. Our king is completely safe and the bishop on g2 is doing a great job dominating the board, both keeping our king safe and eyeing Black's. A sample line could run 22...♖de8 23 d4 ♗b4 24 ♗h3 ♘d7 25 ♖d1 ♖hg8 26 a3 ♗e7 27 c5 h5 28 d5, etc. Just look at those pawns!

b) 20...♔xb7 21 ♘xd4 and White may only have two pawns for the rook, but he's winning at least the exchange back with 22 ♘xe6. Black's king is in deep trouble and I believe this position to be simply winning: for example, 21...♘db8 (or 21...♘dxe5 22 ♘xe6 ♕d6 23 ♘xd8+ ♖xd8 24 ♕xe5) 22

♘xe6 ♕d7 23 ♕b2+ ♔a8 24 ♘xd8 ♖xd8 25 ♗e3 ♕b7 26 ♕c2 followed by 27 ♖b1 with a decisive infiltration on the b-file.

19 ♘h2!



Now that Black's king is stuck in the centre we threaten 20 ♕h5+.

19...♘cxe5

Black is obliged to take the pawn or else he'll just be much worse.

20 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 21 ♗xb7

21 f4!, delaying the recapture on b7, looks the most accurate: 21...gxf4 22 ♗xf4 ♗d6 (22...♗f6 loses to 23 ♘g4! when compared to the game there's no ...♘e5-f3+) 23 ♕h5+ ♔e7 (or 23...♔d8 24 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 25 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 26 ♖xe5 which is much better for White; Black's king is still more vulnerable than ours, whilst our knights have some useful squares from where they can both defend our king and attack Black's) 24 ♕h4+ ♔e8 25 ♘g4! and our attack looks very strong, particularly as 25...♘xg4 loses to 26 ♖xe6+ ♔f7 27 ♗d5. Therefore we'll be material up and with an ongoing attack.

21...♕xb7 22 f4 gxf4 23 ♗xf4 ♗f6

23...♗d6 is also possible: 24 ♕h5+ ♔e7 (24...♔d8 would transpose to the previous note) 25 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 26 ♖xe5 ♖g8 27 ♖e4 is the same as the game except with the bishop on d6. Surprisingly it seems this doesn't add much to Black's attack and means his own king is far weaker.

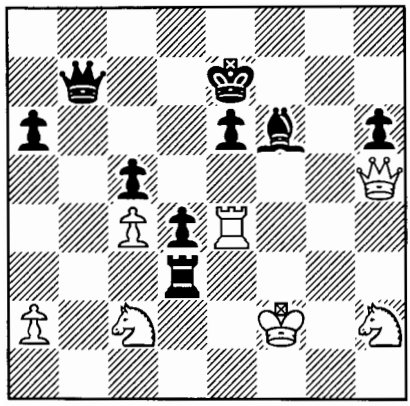
24 ♕h5+ ♔e7 25 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 26 ♖xe5 ♖g8!

Perhaps White overlooked this move. Instead 26...♗xe5 27 ♕xe5 would have been great for him as c5 is dropping.

27 ♖e4

27 ♘f1 ♗xe5 28 ♕xe5 ♖g5 would keep Black's position together.

27...♖xg3+ 28 ♔f2 ♖xd3



So Black has succeeded in obtaining play of his own. We have a piece for the three pawns, but both kings are extremely exposed. White is better, but just the slightly inaccurate play from either side might well prove deadly.

29 ♕f5! ♖d2+

29...♕c8 is probably best, although 30 ♖xe6+ ♕xe6 31 ♕xd3 must favour White with his extra piece, even if with so few pawns a draw is a distinct possibility.

30 ♔e1 ♕b1+ 31 ♔xd2 ♗g5+ 32 ♔e2 d3+?

Black cracks. 32...♕xc2+ was necessary, although White is still clearly better following 33 ♔f3 ♕xc4 34 ♘g4. We would, of course, still have a lot to do here to convert the full point.

33 ♔f2 ♕xc2+ 34 ♔g3 ♗h4+ 35 ♔h3 1-0

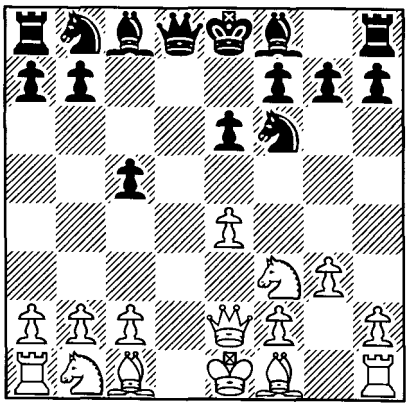
Black has run out of checks and so throws in the towel.

Game 64
S.Sergienko-R.Pasiev
Voronezh 2009

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 d5 4 ♕e2 ♘f6 5 g3 b6

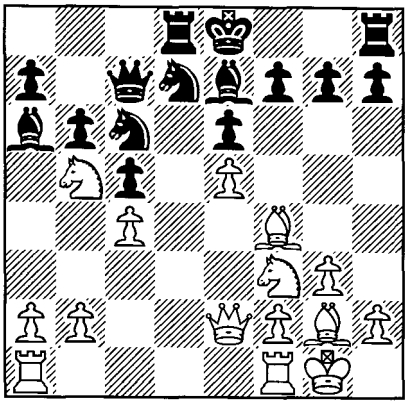
Here I should also mention:

a) Trading with 5...dxe4 6 dxe4 only makes sense if Black couples it with a plan of ...b6 and ...♗a6, but White need not worry:



a1) 6...♗e7 allows us to play normally, with a better version of our main lines: 7 ♗g2 0-0 8 0-0 ♘c6 9 e5 ♘d7 10 ♖d1 ♕c7 11 ♗f4 b6 12 c4 ♗b7 13 ♘c3 ♖ad8 was very pleasant for White in C.Nanu-J.Dovzik, Szeged 1998, and here he should have taken the opportunity to play 14 ♘b5 followed by 15 ♘d6 with a clear advantage.

a2) 6....b6 7 ♗g2 ♗a6 (or 7...♗b7 8 e5 ♘fd7 9 0-0 ♗e7 10 ♖d1 0-0 11 ♘c3!? – it's unusual to play this without first playing c2-c4, but we can move the knight to e4 immediately and as Black has already traded in the centre, c2-c4 doesn't seem to be essential here – 11...h6 12 ♘e4 ♘c6 13 ♗f4 ♕c8 14 h4 which again left White with a very pleasant position in G.Sax-J.Dovzik, Zalakaros 2005) 8 c4 ♘c6 9 e5 ♘d7 10 0-0 ♕c7 11 ♗f4 (11 ♘c3!? is interesting, as the e5-pawn isn't actually threatened yet) 11...♗e7 12 ♘c3 ♖d8 was a game of my own, G.Jones-D.Anderton, British League 2001. Here I should have played 13 ♘b5!.



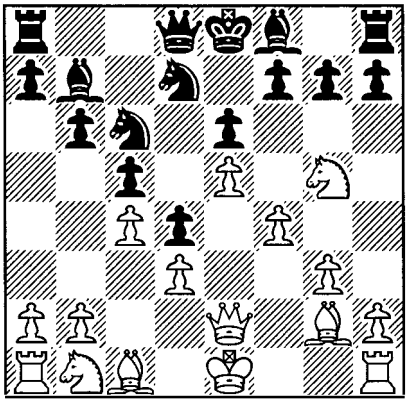
After 13...♗xb5 (13...♕b8 14 ♖ad1 followed by ♘d6 is good for White, as always) 14 cxb5 ♘b4 15 ♖fd1 Black would be under intense pressure, the point being that 15...♘d5? loses to 16 ♖xd5! and therefore 16 a3 is a big threat.

b) Black can also delay the development of his queen's knight with 5...♗e7 6 ♗g2 b6 (6...♘c6 7 0-0 b6 was looked at in Jones-Yudin) 7 e5 ♘fd7 8 c4 ♗b7 9 0-0 d4 when White has scored well with 10 ♘fd2!? ♗xg2 11 ♔xg2 ♕c7 12 f4, supporting the e5-pawn. Psakhis assesses this position as slightly better for White due to his queenside potential and it's hard for Black to generate any counterplay. A game of his continued 12...♘c6 13 ♘e4 0-0-0 14 ♘a3 a6 15 ♘c2 when Black, concerned about the threat of b2-b4, attempted to get play of his own with 15...f5, but after 16 exf6 gxf6 17 f5! e5 18 ♕h5 White had a monster knight on e4 and full control of the position, L.Psakhis-T.Weischede, Groningen 1996.

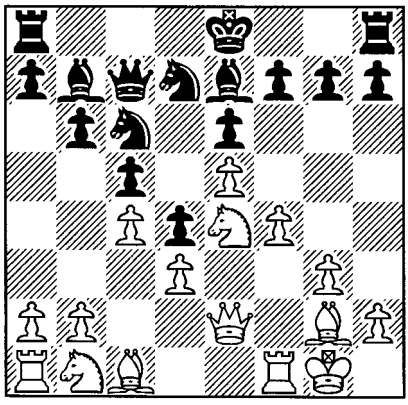
6 e5 ♘fd7 7 ♗g2 ♗b7

7...♘c6 8 c4 d4 9 0-0 should transpose back to the previous game after 9...♗b7 10 h4 ♗e7 11 ♖e1. However, we have an inter-

esting alternative in the shape of 9 ♘g5!? ♗b7 10 f4.



Black has struggled to get any play, as we support e5 securely and can proceed to utilize the e4-square for our knight. Black also has to watch out for an f4-f5 break. However we should not rush into this, first of all we develop our pieces to their strongest squares. After 10...♗e7 11 ♘e4 ♕c7 12 0-0 Black has a choice whether to go long or short with his king. I think queenside can be the only critical choice, as otherwise White must have a pleasant advantage with his e5-pawn and knight on e4, whilst Black really struggles to come up with a plan. The position has come up quite frequently and I've had a look at a few different options:



a) 12...a6 has been played a couple of times by strong players, but White appears to have the better chances after 13 ♘bd2 (13 ♘a3 doesn't make so much sense now that b5 is defended):

a1) 13...0-0-0 14 a3 h6 15 b4! is a typically strong pawn sacrifice: 15...♔b8 (15...cxb4 would allow White a great attack, starting with the intermezzo 16 ♘d6+! ♗xd6 17 exd6 ♕xd6 18 axb4 ♘xb4 19 ♗xb7+ ♔xb7 20 ♗a3 when he has great compensation for the pawn with his play on the a- and b-files; meanwhile the pin is extremely frustrating for Black), and in A.Fedorov-V.Dydyshko, Aars 1999, the most straightforward option looks to be 16 bxc5 ♘xc5 17 ♘xc5 bxc5 (17...♗xc5 18 ♘e4 ♗e7 19 ♖b1 is also unpleasant) 18 ♖b1 when White has succeeded in opening the b-file with extremely awkward pressure, especially against the bishop on b7.

a2) 13...b5 14 b3 g6 15 ♘f3 b4 16 h3 a5 17 a4!? blocks up the queenside to prevent Black's counterplay, so Black now decides the queenside is a safe haven for his king, 17...0-0-0.

However, White still has the better chances and in R.Felgaer-F.El Debs, Sao Paulo 2009, the Argentinean Grandmaster showed a good path to increase his advantage: 18 ♗d2 h6 19 g4 ♖de8 20 ♗e1 f5?! (a move born of frustration; this move hardly ever improves Black's position, but otherwise he has to simply sit and wait for White to continue improving his position) 21 exf6 ♘xf6 22 ♗g3 ♘xe4 23 ♕xe4 g5 24 ♕xe6+ ♔b8 and now White should have continued with the logical 25 ♖ae1, with a great position as 25...gxf4 26 ♗xf4! ♕xf4 27 ♘e5 picks up a lot of material.

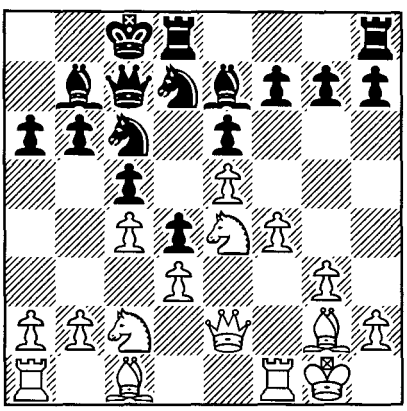
b) 12...h6 has also been played fairly frequently, but Black never gets the chance to play ...g7-g5 so it seems an error to me: 13

♘a3 a6 14 ♘c2 b5 15 ♗d2 b4 16 a3 a5 17 axb4 cxb4?! (17...axb4 18 ♖xa8+ ♗xa8 is safer, although White must still have the better chances following 19 ♖a1 or even 19 ♘a1!?, relocating the knight to b3) 18 f5 gave White a great initiative in F.Bellini-E.Arlandi, Saint Vincent 2000.

c) 12...h5 looks the most critical to me when I think the best is 13 h4, slowing Black's aggressive intentions. After 13...0-0-0, instead of the materialistic 14 ♗f3?! of I.Nikolaidis-D.Mastrovasilis, Kavala 2002, I'd prefer 14 ♘a3 a6 15 ♘c2 with our typical plan of opening up the king with b2-b4. This actually transposes to line 'e1', below.

d) 12...0-0 13 ♘bd2 ♖ae8 14 ♘f3 f6 15 exf6 ♗xf6 16 ♗d2 was extremely comfortable for White in A.Sokolov-V.Rogovski, Alushta 1994.

e) After 12...0-0-0 13 ♘a3! seems the most accurate way to develop a queenside initiative. White threatens to jump in to d6 via b5 so Black's next is forced, 13...a6, when 14 ♘c2! reveals White's point.



There was no future for the knight on d2, as the other knight holds e4, and so this knight's purpose is to aid the opening of the queenside with b2-b4. Now:

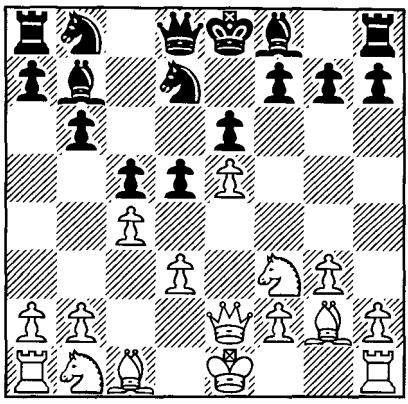
e1) 14...h5 15 h4 (closing down Black's route for counterplay) 15...f6 16 exf6 gxf6 17 f5 (again attempting to keep the kingside closed) 17...exf5 18 ♖xf5 ♗d6 was J.Ehlvest-A.Vaisser, Tallinn 1986, and here 19 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 20 ♗f4 ♕e7 21 ♗f3 ♘ce5 22 ♗xb7+ ♔xb7 23 ♖xh5 is an extra pawn.

e2) 14...h6 15 ♗d2 ♖dg8 (A.Strikovic-R.Paramos Dominguez, Mondariz 1997) 16 ♖ab1 g5 17 b4 would be typical, when White's attack is the faster.

e3) 14...f5 15 exf6 gxf6 16 f5! exf5 (or 16...e5 17 ♗h6 and I don't see how Black gets out of the bind we've erected) 17 ♖xf5 has been reached a couple of times. Here we should be extremely happy as Black's kingside attack has been dealt with and we've been left with active pieces, as well as clear weaknesses in Black's camp to exploit.

Returning to Pasiev's 7...♗b7:

8 c4



8...d4

Others:

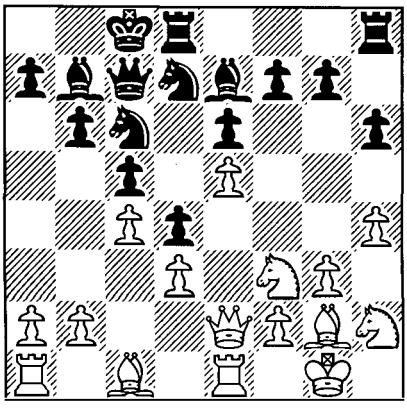
a) 8...♕c7 allowed Morozevich to go his own way with 9 cxd5!? (9 ♘c3 also favours White) 9...♗xd5 10 ♘c3 ♗c6 11 0-0 ♗e7 12 ♖d1 ♕b7 13 d4 cxd4 14 ♖xd4 0-0 15 ♗f4 which gave the Russian the better chances, with more space and a lead in development in A.Morozevich-D.Ruzele, Cappelle la Grande 1997.

b) 8...h6 was played in an online encounter by the strong Russian grandmaster Sergey Volkov: 9 h4 dxc4 10 dxc4 g6 11 ♘c3 ♗g7 when instead of 12 ♘b5, as played in R.Popov-S.Volkov, Internet (blitz) 2004, which allowed Black to confuse the issue with 12...♘xe5, White should play 12 ♗f4 0-0 13 0-0 ♘c6 14 ♖ad1 with a very comfortable advantage as he has all he can hope for. Indeed, the knight can jump into d6 when it totally dominates the board.

9 h4 ♕c7 10 0-0 ♘c6 11 ♖e1 h6 12 ♘bd2 ♗e7 13 ♘f1

We could also try 13 a3, although 13...g5 14 hxg5 hxg5 15 ♘e4 g4 16 ♘h2 ♘cxe5 17 ♘xg4 is unclear.

13...0-0-0 14 ♘1h2



A typical rerouting of the knight.

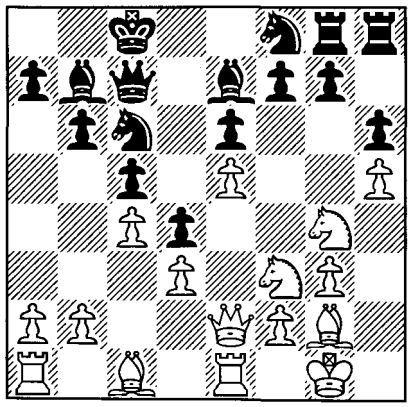
14...♖dg8

An early game in this line continued 14...g5 15 h5 f5!? (sacrificing a pawn to try and get some play; otherwise we manage complete control of the position with 16 ♘g4) 16 exf6 ♘xf6 17 ♕xe6+ ♔b8 18 ♘e5 ♘xe5 19 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 20 ♖xe5 ♖de8 21 ♗xb7 ♔xb7 22 ♗d2 ♗d6 23 ♖xe8 ♖xe8, S.Dolmatov-E.Sveshnikov USSR Championship, Frunze 1981, when White still has great winning chances after 24 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 25 ♗xe1 ♘xh5 26 ♘g4 ♗f8 27 ♔g2 ♔c6 28 ♔f3 ♔d6 29 ♔e4 ♔e6 30 f4 gxf4 31 gxf4 ♘f6+ 32 ♘xf6 ♔xf6 33 ♗h4+ ♔e6 34 f5+ ♔f7 35 ♗g3 as all Black's queenside pawns can be targeted.

15 ♘g4 ♘f8

15...h5 would force us to retreat the knight, but cedes the g5-square when Black would have to give up on any ambitions of a kingside attack.

16 h5!

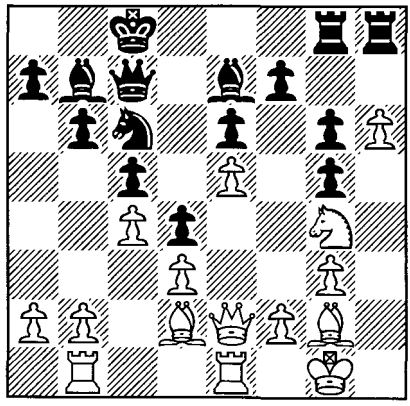


Closing down the kingside before we initiate our queenside attack.

16...♘h7 17 ♗d2 ♘g5 18 ♖ab1 g6?!

This attempt to open up the kingside fails, but it's hard to offer any good suggestions for Black.

19 ♘xg5! hxg5 20 h6



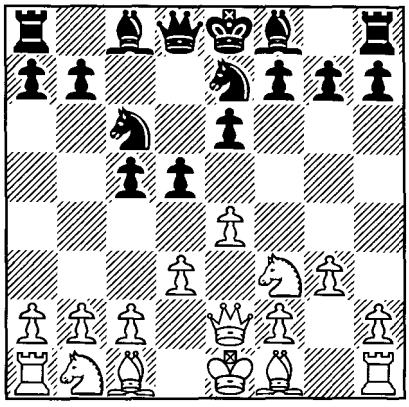
And so the kingside continues to be closed and our knight can't be shifted from g4. Watch how quickly White won this recent game:

20...♔b8 21 a3 ♖c8 22 b4 ♕d8 23 b5 ♘a5 24 ♗xa5 bxa5 25 ♗xb7 1-0

Black resigned as after 26 ♕f3+ the f7-pawn is dropping which is just the start of Black's worries.

Game 65
P.Leko-J.Timman
Wijk aan Zee 2000

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 ♘c6 4 g3 d5 5 ♕e2 ♘ge7



We complete this chapter with a look at this hybrid set-up. The knight on e7 does not put any pressure on our centre, but now e4-e5 won't come with tempo.

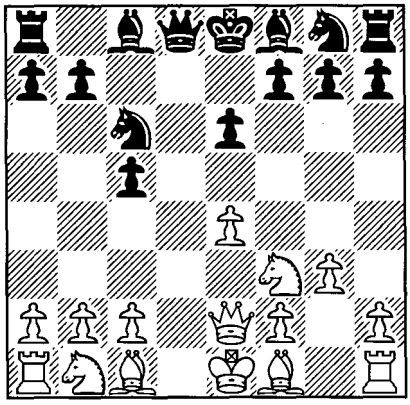
Alternatives are:

a) 5...♕a5+!? has only been attempted once as far as I can see: 6 ♘bd2 ♘b4 was R.Hasangatin-M.Mrva, Piestany 2004, when after 7 ♕d1! White is going to gain back time on the knight with c2-c3 and Black's queen on a5 looks rather misplaced.

b) 5...d4 looks a logical way to gain space, but we can cut across Black's plan with 6 e5!. Here we can exploit the rather early fixing of the centre and attempt to get our typical positions, as seen earlier in the chapter. One perfect example continued 6...♘ge7 7 ♗g2 ♕c7 8 0-0 ♘g6 9 ♖e1 f5?! (as we've seen so often, Black's attempt for counterplay with his f-pawn backfires and simply creates further weaknesses) 10 exf6 gxf6 11 h4 ♗d6 12 ♘a3 e5 13 ♘d2 a6 14 ♘e4 ♗e7 15 ♕f3 f5 16 ♘g5 ♗xg5 17 ♗xg5 ♗e6 18 ♕h5 ♕f7 19 ♕h6 ♗d5 20 h5 ♘ge7 21 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 22 ♘c4 ♔d8 23 ♗xe7+ ♔xe7 24 ♕g7+ ♔e6 25 ♖xe5+ ♘xe5 26 ♖e1 1-0, M.Paragua-F.Ranieri, Nichelino 2004.

c) 5...g6 fails to deal with White's threat of 6 exd5! ♕xd5 7 ♘c3 ♕d8 8 ♘e4 ♗g7 9 c3!? b6 10 ♗g2 ♗a6 11 ♗f4! ♗xd3 12 ♕e3 ♗xe4 13 ♕xe4 ♕d5?! (13...♘ge7 14 ♖d1 is a lesser evil, but still White has great compensation for the pawn) 14 ♕a4 and Black resigned in I.Foygel-A.Shaw, Peterborough 2000. A little premature perhaps, but 14...♘ge7 15 ♖d1 b5 (15...♕h5 16 ♘h4 threatening 17 ♗f3 wins) 16 ♕xb5 ♕e4+ 17 ♔f1! regains the pawn and leaves White with a fantastic position.

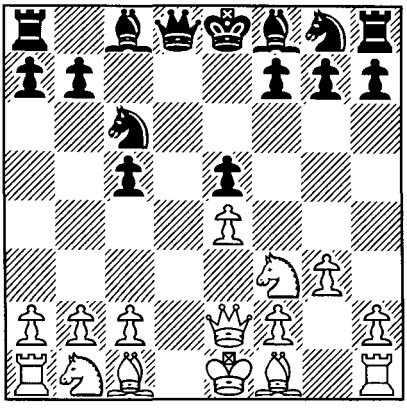
d) 5...dxe4 6 dxe4 is another common try, but as we have seen before, we should be happy with Black immediately taking the pressure off the centre:



d1) 6...♘f6 7 e5! would be my choice, immediately blocking in the bishop on c8 and in all likelihood transposing to positions examined earlier in the chapter, where exchanging in the centre gave us a very pleasant game.

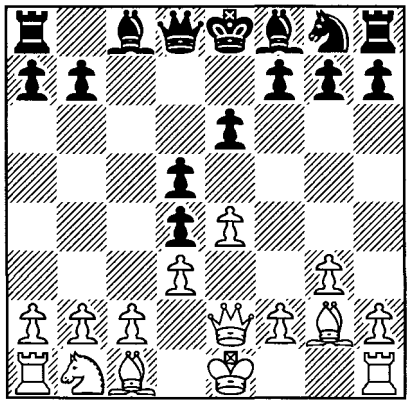
d2) 6...b6 7 ♗g2 a5 8 ♘c3! immediately highlights the drawback to Black's previous move. Look at that beautiful outpost on b5! Here 8...♘d4 9 ♘xd4 cxd4 10 e5 ♖b8 11 ♘b5 ♗b7 12 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 13 ♕e4 ♖d7 14 0-0 ♗c5 15 a3 f5 16 exf6 ♘xf6 17 ♕xe6+ ♖e7 18 ♕c4 ♕d5 19 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 20 b4 and 1-0 was all too easy in G.Beikert-W.Gerstner, German League 2000.

d3) 6...e5 seems critical when we have a strange-looking position.



However, after 7 c3 I prefer White as we can utilize the d5-square and we keep full control over d4. This position has been reached a few times, but I'll just give one example: 7...♗e7 8 ♘a3 ♘f6 9 ♗g2 0-0 10 0-0 h6 11 ♘c4 ♕c7 12 ♘h4 ♖e8 13 ♘e3 (White's knights take over and are looking at jumping into d5 and f5) 13...♗f8 14 ♗d2 ♗d7 15 ♖ad1 ♘e7 16 f4!? (White starts an offensive) 16...♗c6 17 ♘g4 ♘xg4 18 ♕xg4 ♔h7? 19 ♘f3 (19 fxe5 is also strong) 19...exf4 20 ♗xf4 ♕c8 21 ♕h5 g6 22 ♕h4 b6 23 ♘g5+ ♔g8 24 ♘xf7 g5 25 ♗xg5 hxg5 26 ♕h8 mate (1-0) was complete annihilation in G.Vescovi-L.Duarte, Buenos Aires 2005.

e) 5...♘d4 is very rare, but should be taken seriously as a few strong players have attempted it. After 6 ♘xd4 cxd4 7 ♗g2 they have tried:



e1) 7...♘f6 8 0-0 dxe4 9 dxe4 e5 was A.Minasian-P.Negi, Moscow 2006, when White could have kept an advantage with 10 ♕b5+ ♘d7 11 c3.

e2) 7...♘e7 8 0-0 dxe4 9 ♗xe4 ♘c6 10 ♘d2 ♗e7 was C.Bauer-E.Bacrot, Wijk aan Zee 2000, when the straightforward 11 ♘c4 must favour White – just compare the light-squared bishops.

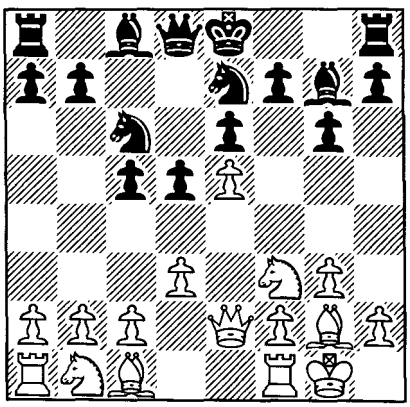
e3) 7...dxe4 8 dxe4 ♕a5+ (or 8...♘e7 9 0-0 ♘c6 10 e5! – it's important not to allow Black to consolidate his weakened d4-pawn with ...e6-e5 – 10...♕c7 11 ♖d1 ♗d7 12 c3 ♕xe5 13 ♕xe5 ♘xe5 14 cxd4 ♘c6 15 ♘c3 0-0-0 16 ♗f4 and White's lead in development gives him an extremely pleasant position, A.Morozevich-L.Ljubojevic, Monte Carlo (rapid) 2003) 9 ♗d2 ♕b6 10 ♘a3! ♕xb2 11 ♕b5+ ♕xb5 12 ♘xb5 ♔d8 13 e5 ♗c5 14 ♗a5+ ♗b6 15 ♗xb6+ axb6 16 0-0-0!? and White had a strong initiative in P.Leko-L.Ljubojevic, Monte Carlo (blindfold) 2001.

Now we can return to 5...♘ge7:

6 ♗g2 g6

6...b6 is likely to transpose to the main line as Black won't be able to do without ...g6, but 6...h6 is an interesting move order. I think we should simply castle as 7 h4 would transpose to a line we're not covering in this book. Thus 7 0-0 when 7...b6 8 exd5 exd5 (8...♘xd5 9 c4 ♘de7 10 ♘c3 is rather pleasant as Black is so far behind in development) 9 ♘e5 would exploit Black's lack of development.

7 0-0 ♗g7 8 e5



I think it's most logical to keep with the same theme as in the rest of the chapter. However, we should be careful when playing c2-c4, as the knight on e7 is on a better circuit than in the ...♘f6-d7 lines and can come to d4 immediately via f5. Therefore, we often play c2-c3 here to prevent Black from gaining squares.

White has alternative move orders, though, which we can utilize to try and keep our position as flexible as possible:

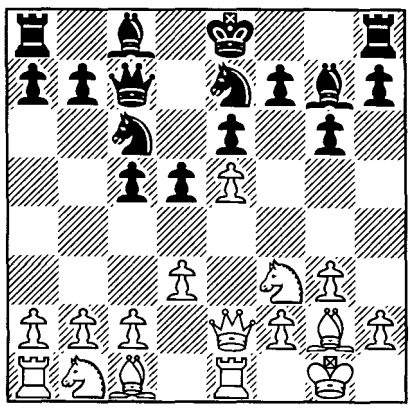
a) 8 ♖e1!? has proven successful. We want to put our pieces on the same squares as in the main game, but not allow Black the use of f5 yet. Play is very likely to transpose, although after 8...b6 9 h4 ♗b7 10 c3 ♕c7?! (I never understand Black giving White a free tempo to develop his bishop) 11 ♗f4 ♕d7 12 ♘a3 ♗a6 13 e5 h6 14 ♘c2 ♕c7 15 b4! g5 16 hxg5 hxg5 in C.Bauer-E.Agrest, Ourense 2009, the simplest is 17 ♗xg5 ♘g6 18 ♗f6 with a clear edge.

b) 8 c3 is seen in the following game, Morozevich-Gleizerov.

8...h6

Black can also try to do without ...h6, although White can normally transpose by playing h2-h4 himself, which persuades Black to react with ...h7-h6 to discourage h4-h5.

Instead 8...♕c7 was tried in a fairly recent high-powered blitz game in which White proved triumphant after 9 ♖e1:



a) 9...h6 10 h4 would transpose to 9...♕c7.

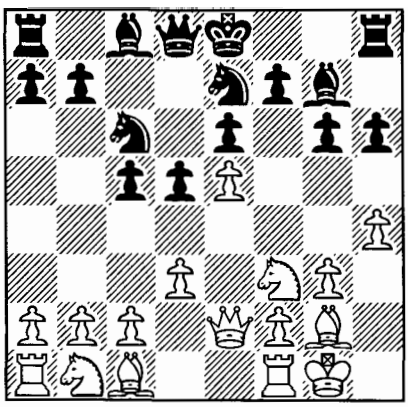
b) This line definitely has some pedigree. In fact, the first game I could find that reached this position was from the World Championship match between David Bronstein and Mikhail Botvinnik. That game continued 9...a6 10 c3 ♗d7 11 ♘a3!? (the knight is destined for c2 from where it can jump to the kingside, help support the centre following d3-d4 or assist opening up Black's position with b2-b4) 11...h6 12 ♖b1 ♘f5 13 ♘c2 ♖c8 14 h4 ♕a5 15 a3 ♕d8 16 ♗f4 (16 ♘e3! looks strong too) 16...0-0 17 ♘e3 ♘xe3 18 ♕xe3 ♔h7 19 ♘h2 ♘e7 20 ♘g4 ♘g8 (20...♘f5 looks infinitely more

logical, but White would still hold a pull) 21 ♕d2 (21 ♖ec1 followed by 22 b4 definitely comes into consideration) 21...♗c6 22 d4 cxd4 23 ♕xd4 ♗b5 24 b3 a5 25 a4 ♗a6 and the World Champion managed to hold on but his position wasn't pleasant in D.Bronstein-M.Botvinnik, World Championship (Game 14), Moscow 1951.

c) That fairly recent blitz game continued 9...b6 when I think White should continue with 10 ♘a3 (10 c4 was the choice of the top Israeli in B.Gelfand-J.Polgar, Moscow (blitz) 2009, but 10...dxc4 11 dxc4 ♘f5 12 ♘c3 ♘cd4 13 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 equalizes; we should remember not to play c2-c4 too early in this variation as Black has more control over the d4-square) 10...a6 (10...♗a6 11 c3 would transpose to Morozevich-Gleizerov, seen next) 11 c3 ♗b7 12 ♘c2 (12 d4 is also possible, transposing to a French-type position in which White is probably a little better) 12...0-0 13 h4 ♖fd8 14 ♗f4 d4 15 c4 b5 16 b3 bxc4 17 bxc4 had reached a typical King's Indian Attack with good potential for White to start an initiative in Yu Shaoteng-B.Villamayor, Tagaytay City 2004.

Note that 8...b6 9 ♘a3 ♗a6 10 c3 will be seen in the following encounter, Morozevich-Gleizerov.

9 h4



Again it's important to prevent Black from playing ...g6-g5, as then our e5-pawn would be in trouble following ...g5-g4 and ...♘e7-g6.

9...b6

The alternative is 9...♕c7 10 ♖e1 and then:

a) 10...b5 11 ♗f4 a5 leads to a further split:

a1) 12 ♘bd2 a4 13 a3 ♗b7 14 ♘f1 b4 15 ♘1h2 reaches a typical KIA position where Black has grabbed space on the queenside and we have slowly prepared our kingside assault. M.Mchedlishvili-D.Laylo, Manila 2008, continued 15...♘f5 16 c3 h5 (preventing our knight from hopping into g4, but creating a hole on g5) 17 ♗g5 bxc3 18 bxc3 ♘a5 19 ♖ab1 ♘b3 20 ♗f6 c4 21 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 22 d4 ♕e7 23 ♕a2 0-0-0 when 24 ♘f1 ♘e8 25 ♘e3 ♘c7 26 ♘c2 ♘b5 27 ♕b2 followed by ♘b4 gives White a very promising position. He can continue to pressure Black with ♘g5 and ♖e3-f3.

a2) 12 ♘c3!? is highly unusual, but after 12...♗a6 13 a4 b4 14 ♘b5 ♗xb5 15 axb5 ♘d4 16 ♕d1 ♘xb5 17 c4! bxc3 18 bxc3 0-0 19 c4 White has strong compensation thanks to the raking bishop-pair.

b) 10...♘d4 seems like Black's most-critical response when 11 ♘xd4 cxd4 12 c3 is the best way to challenge Black's centre and develop the queenside. Then 12...dxc3 13 bxc3 ♘c6 14 d4 ♘a5 was L.Bruzon Bautista-H.Urday Caceres, Cali 2000, when I like 15 ♕f3, defending the c3-pawn. Following the logical 15...0-0 16 h5 g5 17 ♗a3 ♖d8 18 ♘d2 White has a pleasant plus.

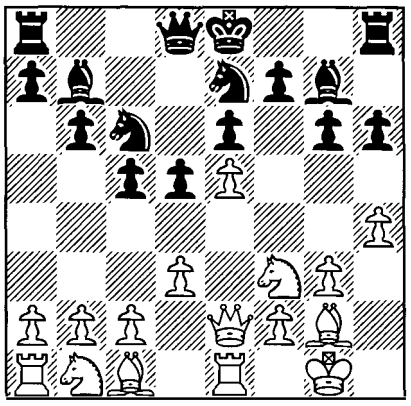
Generally Black players decline castling as long as possible, as otherwise White can build up an initiative very quickly, as we'll see in the notes to Morozevich-Gleizerov.

10 ♖e1

Overprotecting e5 in readiness for an at-

tempt by Black to seize the initiative with ...g6-g5.

10...♗b7



11 c3

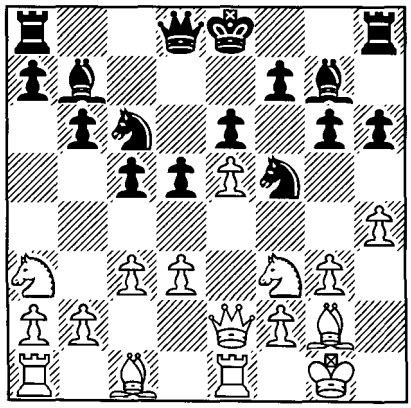
11 c4 is riskier here as the knight on e7 has access to d4. Indeed, 11...dxc4 12 dxc4 ♘f5 13 ♘c3 ♘cd4 14 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 equalizes. Therefore with the text White keeps control of the d4-square and gets ready to play d3-d4, after which we should have an advantage with our space advantage and control of the centre.

11...♘f5

a) 11...d4 (as elsewhere in the chapter we're happy when Black closes up the centre) 12 c4 ♕c7 13 ♗f4 when Black's bid for counterplay with 13...g5 14 hxg5 ♘g6 15 ♘bd2 hxg5 (15...0-0-0 16 ♘e4 ♘cxe5 17 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 18 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 19 g6! keeps the advantage, the idea being 19...fxg6 20 ♘xc5! ♕xc5 21 ♕xe6+ ♔b8 22 ♗xb7 ♔xb7 23 ♕f7+ regaining the piece with interest) 16 ♗xg5 ♘cxe5 17 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 18 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 19 ♘e4 ♕c6 20 f4 ♘d7 was A.Dgebuadze-G.Ligterink, Haarlem 2000, when 21 ♗h4 would have left Black awkwardly placed without a safe location for his king.

b) 11...♕d7 12 a3!? (12 ♘a3 as per the game seems very sensible) 12...b5 13 ♘bd2 c4 14 a4 cxd3 15 ♕xd3 bxa4 16 ♕c2 0-0 17 ♕xa4 ♕c7 18 ♘b3! ♘xe5 19 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♗xh6 ♖fe8 21 ♘a5 ♗a6 22 ♗g5 was already very ugly for Black, but 22...f6? allowed 23 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 24 ♖xe6 ♖f8 25 ♖xa6 ♖ab8 26 ♕c2 with a decisive advantage in A.Lastin-P.Zarubin, Moscow 1995.

12 ♘a3!



This is a very sensible move in these positions, as now Black has to deal with both a threat of ♘b5-d6, if the knight were to shift from f5, and the more important ♘a3-c2, supporting d3-d4 and b2-b4.

12...♕d7 13 ♘c2 d4

Timman decides it's better to close the centre on his own terms than allow Leko to play d3-d4. Black also had to watch out for the interesting b2-b4!?: for instance, 13...0-0-0 14 b4! opening up the b-file and trying to create an outpost for one of the knights on d4.

14 c4

We're back into our typical type of position for the chapter. We should be happy with the closed centre, as now we don't have to worry about Black using the d4-outpost and we can prepare our assault on whichever flank Black decides to send his king. The knight looks rather strange on c2, but as we will see in the game, it's actually

a very useful post in order to help White open up the queenside with a future b2-b4 thrust.

14...0-0-0

Castling kingside was the other option, but Black has to be very careful of White's slow but dangerous attack whilst it's unclear from where his counterplay will arise. Indeed, 14...0-0 15 g4!? ♘fe7 16 ♗f4 looks rather promising for us.

15 ♖b1!

The logical move, preparing to open up lines towards Black's king.

15...♗f8

Trying to keep the queenside closed with 15...♘b4 doesn't help, as after 16 ♘xb4 cxb4 17 ♗d2 ♗f8 18 a3 b3 19 a4! White's attack has not been slowed.

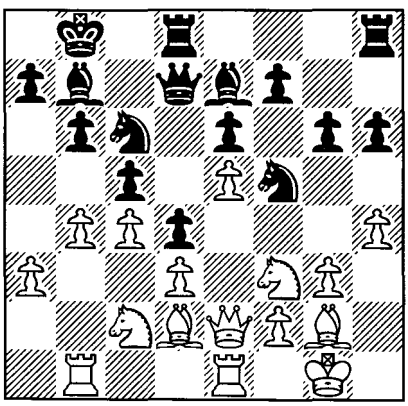
16 ♗d2 ♔b8

16...a5? also fails to keep the queenside closed: 17 a3 a4 18 b4 axb3 19 ♖xb3 is given as winning by Psakhis, as there's no way to defend the b6-pawn.

17 a3!?

17 b4 looks more logical, but Leko decides there's no rush and wants to have the option of an open a-file too.

17...♗e7 18 b4



18...♖dg8

Timman desperately tries to marshal his forces together to create a counterattack, but it's clear White's queenside play is breaking through first.

19 bxc5 ♗xc5 20 ♗b4!

Black can no longer keep the queenside closed.

20...♗xb4

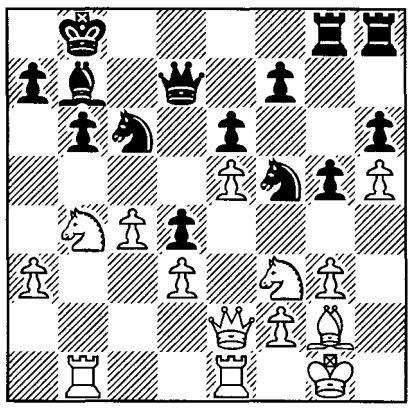
20...♗e7 looks the toughest defence, keeping the position closed for the longest period of time, but 21 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 22 ♘b4 will be rather similar to the game.

Instead 20...♘xb4 21 axb4 ♗e7 22 ♖a1 looks decidedly awkward.

21 ♘xb4!?

Attempting to exchange off another pair of pieces defending the black monarch, but 21 axb4 looks great for White: for example, 21...g5 22 h5 when Black has absolutely no counterplay and can do little but sit and wait while White's attack on the queenside starts to brew. If that weren't enough, the d4-pawn is also rather vulnerable.

21...g5 22 h5!



Of course you keep the kingside closed so that Black gets no chance to complicate the issue.

22...g4 23 ♘d2 ♘xb4

23...♔a8 gives me the impression of a sitting duck. Perhaps White's most straight-

forward is 24 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 25 ♗xc6+ ♕xc6 26 ♘e4 followed by ♖ec1 and c4-c5 when I doubt Black can hang on for long.

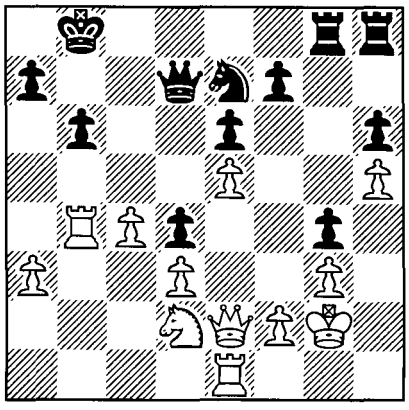
24 ♖xb4

Keeping the b-file open to continue the attack. c4-c5 is now a big threat.

24 axb4 would also have been very promising for White.

24...♗xg2 25 ♔xg2 ♘e7

25...♖c8, defending against the c4-c5 threat, only slows the inevitable after 26 ♘e4!. There's no need to be greedy and snatch the g4-pawn with 26 ♕xg4, as that pawn isn't going anywhere and we don't want any lines open towards our king.



26 ♘e4

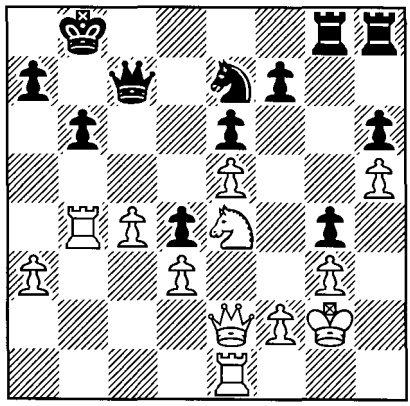
This doesn't throw away any of the advantage, but 26 c5! immediately was more precise when Black really struggles to survive. For example:

a) 26...♘c6 27 ♖b5 ♘e7 28 ♖eb1 ♘d5 29 ♘e4 ♔a8 30 cxb6 ♘xb6 31 ♔h2!, taking a time out to put the king on a square from which there are no checks, when Black's position is resignable as White simply has too many threats.

b) 26...♕d5+ 27 ♘e4 ♘c6 28 ♖b5 ♕xe5 29 ♖eb1 and Black cannot prevent White crashing through.

c) 26...♘d5 is perhaps what worried Leko, but 27 ♖xd4 ♕b7 (27...bxc5 28 ♖b1+ ♔a8 29 ♖c4 is easy) 28 ♔g1 bxc5 29 ♖xg4 shouldn't be too difficult to convert.

26...♕c7



27 ♘f6

27 ♖b5!, as given by Psakhis, looks very strong, although he's wrong to give 27 ♘f6 a question mark.

27...♖g5! 28 c5?!

But here Leko starts to go astray. He could have kept a clear advantage with 28 ♕e4 ♕b7 29 ♖b5! as White's knight is so strong, and Black's d4- and g4-pawns so weak, that the endgame doesn't give Black any solace.

28...♕b7+ 29 ♘e4

29 ♕e4 ♘c6 30 cxb6 ♘xb4 31 bxa7+ ♔xa7 32 axb4 is a rather baffling line given by Psakhis who claims a clear advantage for White, but I disagree. Following 32...♖b8! 33 ♖a1+ ♔b6 the position just looks highly unclear. It's unnecessary to give away the exchange.

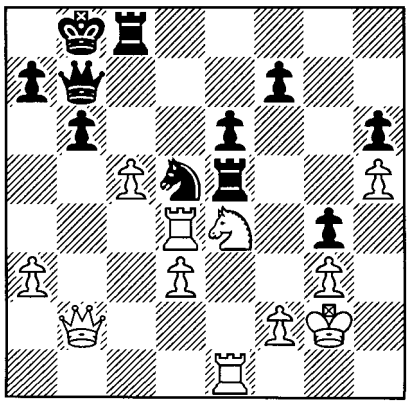
29 ♔g1!, on the other hand, retains the better chances, as 29...♘c6 (Black has to grab any material going, otherwise White is close to winning) 30 cxb6 ♘xb4 31 bxa7+ ♔xa7 32 axb4 gives White great compensation for the exchange, as Black's king is so vulnerable. Compared to Psakhis' line with

29 ♕e4, it's clear that having the queens on the board favours White.

29...♘d5!

With the active knight, Black has some counter-chances, although White is still better.

30 ♖xd4 ♖xe5 31 ♕b2 ♖c8



32 cxb6?!

Rushing rather. Leko would have kept all the chances with 32 ♔g1!, a strong prophylactic move, transferring the king off the dangerous diagonal, so that 32...bxc5 33 ♕xb7+ ♔xb7 34 ♘xc5+ picks up material.

32...♘xb6 33 ♖d8 ♖xh5 34 ♖xc8+ ½-½

Leko, evidently not happy with the last few moves, decides to offer a draw which was gratefully accepted by Timman. However, 34...♘xc8 35 ♕c3! f5 36 ♕e5+ ♔a8 37 ♖c1 would still have left White with a dangerous attack.

Game 66
A.Morozevich-E.Gleizerov
Tomsk 1998

1 e4 e6 2 d3 c5 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 c3

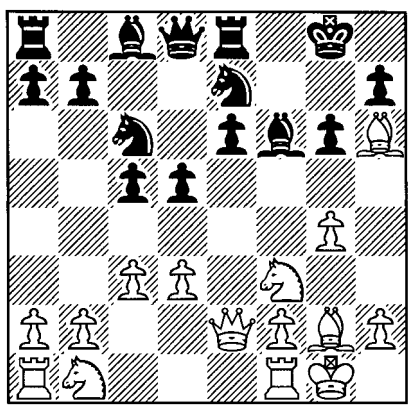
A rather committal move order. Instead 4 g3 d5 5 ♕e2 ♘ge7 6 ♗g2 g6 7 0-0 ♗g7 8 c3 would be a more typical move order, transposing to the game.

4...d5 5 ♕e2 ♘ge7 6 g3 g6 7 ♗g2 ♗g7 8 0-0 h6

8...0-0 is of course a very logical move and may well transpose, but Black can try to do without ...h6. However, Black has now committed his king and so we can start thinking about a kingside initiative after 9 e5:

a) 9...b6 10 ♗f4 a5 11 a4! ♘f5 12 ♖e1 and Black is struggling for counterplay. In L.Psakhis-G.Ligterink, Hoogeveen 1997, he tried lashing out with 12...f6 13 ♘a3 g5!? (13...fxe5 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 ♗xe5 gives White a pleasant positional advantage), but 14 exf6 ♗xf6 15 ♗e5 g4 16 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 17 ♘e5 (17 ♘d2!? is also possible if you'd prefer to keep more pieces on) 17...♘xe5 18 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 19 ♖xe5 left Black in an awkward position. White has more space and can force more concessions in Black's position with c3-c4 and h2-h3.

b) Of course we must always be ready for 9..f6 10 exf6 ♗xf6 11 ♗h6 ♖e8 and here I like the move played by another World Champion, Bobby Fischer, namely 12 g4!?, preventing the knight from jumping into f5.



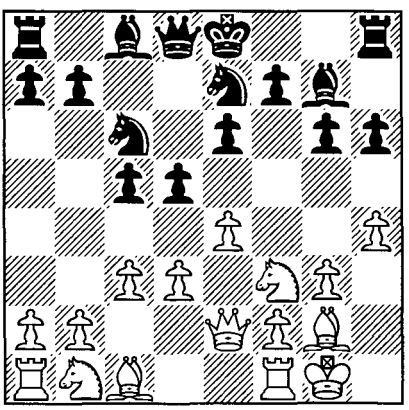
R.Fischer-R.Rodriguez, Manila 1967, continued 12...e5 13 h3 ♕c7 14 c4! (forcing

Black to make a concession) 14...e4!? (14...d4 15 ♘bd2 is awful for Black as the e4-outpost is so strong) 15 dxe4 dxe4 16 ♘g5 ♘d4 17 ♕xe4 ♗d7 18 ♘c3 ♗c6 19 ♕d3 and White had an extra pawn.

c) 9...h6 10 ♘a3 will probably transpose to note 'b2' to Black's 9th move in our main game.

d) 9...b5 10 ♗e3!? ♘xe5 (10...c4 11 d4 transposes to a typical French style set-up which should be good for White as Black has been forced to close the centre with ...c5-c4, allowing us free rein on the kingside) 11 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 12 ♗xc5 ♗d6 13 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 14 ♘d2 has been reached a couple of times and it seems like White has the better chances with a stronger bishop and chances to utilize the dark squares: for example, 14...♖b8 15 b4! (creating an outpost on c5 and fixing Black's b5-pawn as a potential weakness) 15...e5 16 a4 a6 17 axb5 axb5 was J.Timman-F.Sanz Alonso, Orense 1976, when 18 ♘b3 followed by 19 d4 and 20 ♘c5 gives White a great position.

9 h4



Now Black has to decide how he's going to complete his development.

9...b6

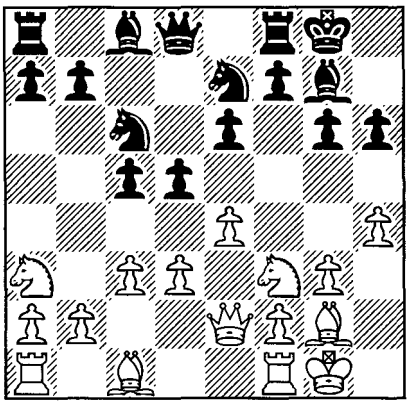
This has been Black's most common response and is similar to the previous game. Others:

a) Again we should be happy if Black closes the centre with 9...d4 10 e5!. We don't want to allow Black to gain space with ...e6-e5 and after 10...♘f5, 11 ♗f4 looks sensible, with an edge.

b) 9...0-0 has been condemned by various annotators:

b1) 10 e5 is much the most common response and the supposed refutation of immediate castling, but I think Black may be able to fight back immediately with 10...f6 11 exf6 ♖xf6 12 ♗f4 (as I.Glek-S.Siebrecht, Essen (rapid) 2000; Psakhis' 12 ♘a3 isn't clear either after 12...e5!) 12...♖xf4!? 13 gxf4 ♕d6 when the initiative has switched to Black and gives him good play for the exchange.

b2) 10 ♘a3 looks more flexible to me, delaying e4-e5 for a move, while slowing down Black's queenside play and simply developing a piece. The knight always looks a little strange here, but it will jump back into the game, either via b5 to d6 or back to c2. The latter is a great square for the knight, as it not only supports d3-d4 and prepares b2-b4 in certain scenarios, but it's also on a fast track to the kingside via e3-g4, putting pressure on the h6-pawn.

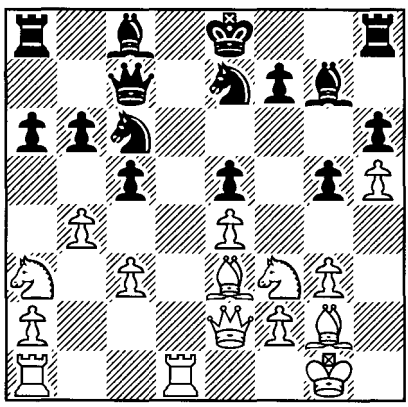


After 10...b6 11 e5 ♗a6 12 ♗f4 ♔h8 13

♕d2 ♘g8 14 ♖fe1 b5 15 ♘c2 Black's queenside play had already stalled in Y.Visser-S.Collas, Andorra 2001. He tried the desperate 15...b4, but 16 cxb4 cxb4 17 ♘fd4 ♘xd4 18 ♘xd4 ♕b6 19 ♘b3 ♖fc8 20 ♗e3 ♕b5 21 ♗f1 left White with a powerful initiative and Black's pieces lacking coordination.

c) 9...e5!? 10 exd5 ♕xd5 (S.Zavgorodniy-G.Kuzmin, Alushta 2003) 11 ♘fd2 ♕d8 12 h5 g5 13 ♘a3 ♗e6 14 ♘ac4 0-0 15 a4 and I'd prefer White with a more flexible position. We have plans to target the c5-pawn and provoke ...b7-b6 when we can continue attacking on the queenside with a4-a5. Black might also start regretting his weakened king.

d) 9...dxe4, as in the King's Indian, is an early exchange which is nothing to worry about. The structure following 10 dxe4 e5 favours White as we have the d5-square to utilize, whilst our c3-pawn stops Black obtaining any counterplay. We can also use our development advantage: for example, 11 h5 g5, as in L.Voloshin-N.Vyskocil, Havlickuv Brod 2005, and then 12 ♖d1 ♕c7 13 ♗e3 b6 14 ♘a3 a6 15 b4!.



This simply leaves White with a great position.

e) 9...f5!? has only been tried once as far as I can see, when rather than 10 e5 as played in E.Verikakis-C.Berczes, Aghia Pelagia 2004, I'd prefer 10 exd5 exd5 (after 10...♘xd5 11 ♘a3 0-0 12 ♘c4 White takes control of e5, instantly exploiting the weakness which Black created with 9...f5) 11 ♘a3 0-0 12 ♗f4 and Black's pawn on f5 looks really out of place. The bishop on c8 is blocked in by it and Black has big weaknesses on e5 and e6.

f) 9...♕c7 has also been played a couple of times: 10 exd5 ♘xd5 (as in V.Toporov-V.Karasev, St Petersburg 1998; instead 10...exd5 11 ♗e3 b6 12 d4 is a definite edge), and now 11 h5 looks very strong as 11...g5?! allows White to pick up material with 12 ♘xg5!. Thus 11...gxh5 seems forced, but is extremely ugly and White has a comfortable advantage following the simple 12 ♘fd2!.

10 ♘a3!

A flexible move and an approach very similar to the previous game. 10 e5 is more common, but it makes sense to delay it as it allows Black counterplay in the shape of the ...g6-g5 break.

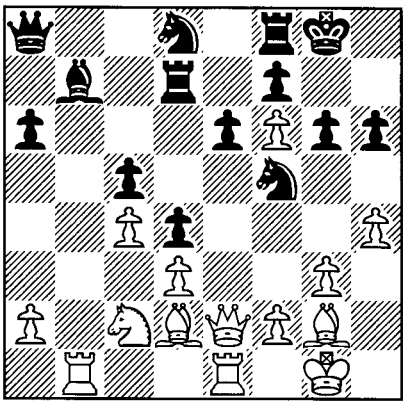
10...♗a6

Again there are alternatives:

a) 10...0-0 11 e5 transposes to note 'b2' to Black's 9th move, above.

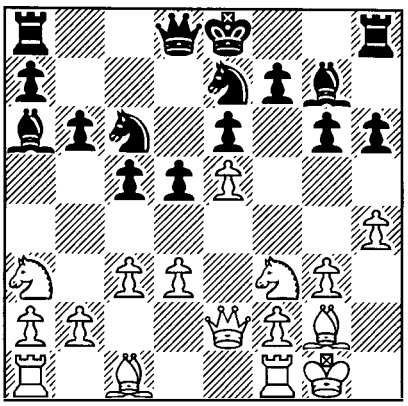
b) 10...♗b7 11 e5 a6 transposes to variation 'c'.

c) 10...a6 is the other way to prevent the knight from jumping into b5: 11 e5 ♗b7 12 ♘c2 d4 (Black prevents d3-d4 cementing our centre; alternatively, 12...♕c7 13 ♖e1 a5 14 a4 ♕d7 15 d4 ♗a6 16 ♕d1 ♕c7 17 ♗f4 ♘f5 18 ♕d2 left White in control in L.Psakhis-J.Horvath, Vienna 1996) 13 c4 ♕c7 14 ♖e1 ♖d8 15 ♗d2 ♕b8 16 ♖ab1 ♕a8 17 b4 0-0 18 bxc5 bxc5 19 ♘h2 ♖d7 20 ♘g4 ♘f5 21 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 22 exf6 ♘d8 was the game S.Belkhodja-A.Dgebuadze, Creon 2000.



Now keeping the bishops on with 23 ♗h3 looks strongest, giving White an overwhelming advantage. We have a very basic threat of ♕e5-f4 followed by exchanging on f5.

11 e5



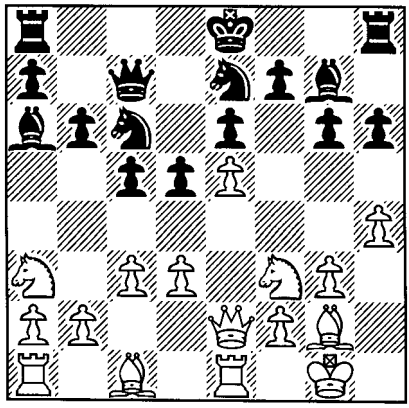
11...♕c7

Again 11...0-0 would transpose to a position considered earlier, while 11...♕d7 would be very similar to the game. That leaves:

a) 11...b5 has been tried as a bid for counterplay, but White keeps the upper hand with straightforward play: 12 ♘c2 b4 13 cxb4 cxb4 14 a3 b3 15 ♘b4 ♗b5 was M.Khachiyan-G.Gogichaishvili, Pasanauri 1997, when 16 ♗d2 0-0 17 a4 is very good for White.

b) 11...♕c8 looks extremely odd: 12 ♖e1 b5 13 ♘c2 b4 (S.Beshukov-T.Likavsky, Bydgoszcz 2000) 14 cxb4 cxb4 15 ♗f4 gives White the advantage due to our control of d4. Meanwhile Black has problems with his king as if he ever castles short then White's attack will become serious.

12 ♖e1



12...g5?!

This doesn't work out well for Black and so he might prefer:

a) 12...0-0 is sensible, but White's attack can now begin: 13 ♗f4 b5 (otherwise it's not clear what Black should do) 14 ♘c2 b4 15 cxb4! (taking the d4-square under control) 15...♘xb4 16 ♘xb4 cxb4 17 ♕d2 ♔h7 was A.Stolte-A.Von Gleich, German League 1989, when the easiest seems to be 18 ♕xb4, as the forcing line 18...♗xd3 19 ♖ac1 ♕d7 20 ♕d6! ♕e8 21 ♕a3 ♗e4 22 ♘d4 ♗xg2 23 ♔xg2 would give us a pleasant edge, with our more actively-placed pieces and queenside play.

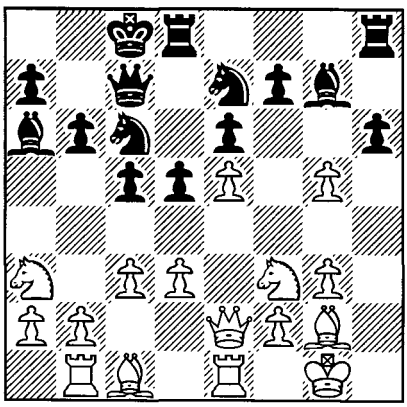
b) 12...b5 13 ♘c2 b4 14 cxb4 (by now we know how we should defuse this bid for counterplay) 14...cxb4 15 ♗f4 ♕b6 16 ♕d2 h5 (Black wants to be able to castle, but this cedes control of the important g5-square) 17 ♗e3 (the 17 d4 of A.Fedorov-S.Dolmatov,

Calcutta 1999, doesn't seem so logical; I'd prefer to keep that square for my knights) 17...♕b5 18 ♗f1 0-0 19 d4 (okay, so I'll play it now, but it nets a pawn) 19...♕b6 20 ♗xa6 ♕xa6 21 ♘xb4 ♘xb4 22 ♕xb4 and White has an extra pawn.

c) 12...0-0-0 look safer for Black, but we can attack on the queenside too after 13 ♖b1!, preparing b2-b4 to open up files towards Black's king. Now:

c1) 13...♔b8 14 b4 cxb4 15 cxb4 b5 (a horrible move to have to play, but b4-b5 was a huge threat while if the a6-bishop moves then ♘a3-b5-d6 would leave us in a winning position) 16 ♘c2 ♖c8 17 a4 ♘xe5 (V.Bologan-A.Khruschiov, Minsk 2000) 18 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 (or 18...♕xc2 19 ♘xf7!) 19 axb5 ♗d6 (19...♗xb5 20 ♘a3 wins material) 20 ♘d4 ♗b7 21 ♗e3 e5 22 ♕a2! and White's attack is mating.

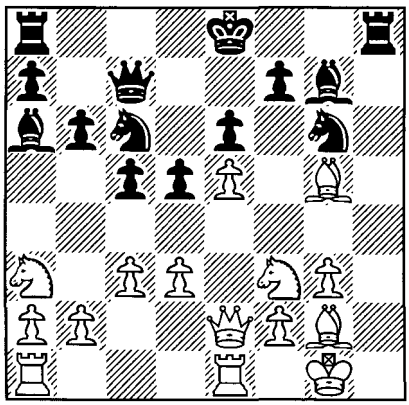
c2) 13...g5 is the only move we should be careful of once Black has castled long, but here simply Black has no real compensation after 14 hxg5.



For example, 14...♘g6 15 gxh6 ♗xe5 (if 15...♗xh6 16 ♗xh6 ♖xh6 17 b4 and White's attack is fast while Black can do little with the open h-file) 16 b4! (the Russian supergrandmaster doesn't miss the chance for some tactics) 16...♗xc3 17 b5 ♗xe1 18 ♕xe1 and Black was in a lot of trouble in A.Morozevich-A.Lastin, Moscow (blitz) 2001.

d) 12...♘b8 looks slow and extremely artificial. Black's idea is to put more pressure on the e5-pawn with one knight on c6 and one on d7, but after the 13 ♗f4 ♘d7 14 ♕d2 ♖d8 15 d4 ♔f8!? of J.Rowson-I.Efimov, Istanbul Olympiad 2000, 16 ♘c2 (keeping the bishops on the board) 16...♔g8 17 ♘e3, as given by Psakhis, gives White a pleasant advantage. Despite the fact that Black hasn't castled, White's attack on the kingside is still commanding.

13 hxg5 hxg5 14 ♗xg5 ♘g6



It looks like Black is winning back the e5-pawn when he would have a great position, but a nasty surprise awaits him.

15 ♕d1!

Evidently this is the move that Black overlooked. ♕d1-a4 is a big problem for Black, but if he doesn't take on e5 then we can consolidate our extra pawn with 16 d4.

15...♘gxe5 16 ♘xe5 ♗xe5

16...♘xe5 17 ♕a4+ picks up a piece.

17 ♕a4! ♗b7 18 ♘b5

Morozevich keeps playing forcefully with the initiative.

18...♕b8

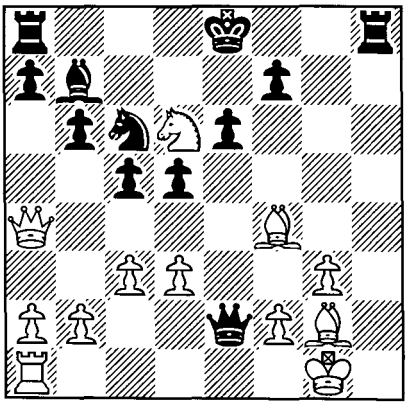
18...♕d7 also allows 19 ♖xe5!, picking up material: 19...♘xe5 20 ♘d6+ ♔f8 21

♕xd7 ♘xd7 22 ♘xb7 when the two bishops are a decisive advantage.

19 ♖xe5! ♕xe5

19...♘xe5 might be a lesser evil, but still 20 ♗f6 ♔d7 21 d4 ♘c6 22 ♗xh8 ♕xh8 23 dxc5 bxc5 24 ♕f4 picks up a pawn while the initiative is ongoing.

20 ♗f4 ♕e2 21 ♘d6+



The b7-bishop drops. White has two pieces for the rook and even though Black manages to get a pawn for it, the vulnerability of his king decides.

21...♔d7 22 ♘xb7 ♕xb2 23 ♖c1

White's threat of 24 c4 is extremely problematic.

23...♖ab8

23...♖ag8 seems forced to stop the threat, but then 24 ♘d6 f6 25 ♘b5 ♖g4 26 ♕a6 is winning for White.

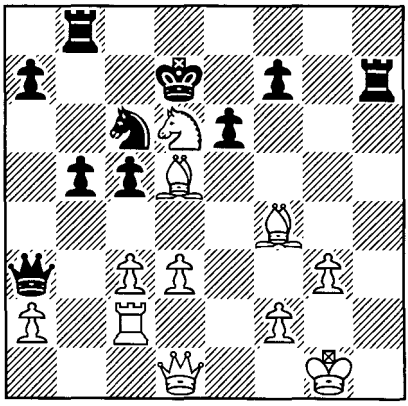
24 ♘d6

24 c4!? is an alternative possibility, but there's no need to complicate the issue.

24...b5 25 ♕d1! ♖h7 26 ♖c2 ♕a3 27 ♗xd5!

1-0 *(see following diagram)*

Opening up Black's king and thus he resigned. After 27...exd5 28 ♕g4+ ♔e7 29 ♘f5+ it's only a matter of time before he gets mated.

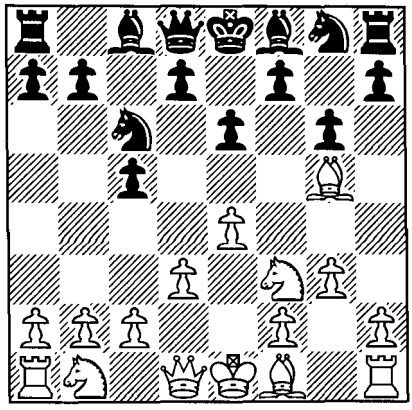


Conclusion

The positions we have examined in this chapter most resemble the French Defence and indeed often transpose. This can be advantageous to us as our opponents might well be tricked into positions that aren't familiar to them. As White we should be careful to keep Black restricted. In a perfect King's Indian Attack Black will be completely tied down and have to simply wait for our juggernaut of an attack to arrive and steam-roll his position. To this end, we should be careful about Black liberating his position with ...g7-g5. Overprotecting the e5-pawn is vital, as this is the front of our wedge with which we keep Black suffocated.

Chapter Ten
King's Indian Attack without ...d5

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 ♘c6 4 ♗g2 g6 5 ♗g5!?



This chapter covers those lines in which Black delays playing ...d7-d5. The chapter is divided into two. First of all in Games 67-70 we examine the very interesting sideline 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 ♘c6 4 ♗g2 g6 5 ♗g5!? which I have been playing for the past ten years with good results and very interesting games. Black can cut out this interesting option with 4...♘ge7 which I also examine in depth in Game 71. Then we move on to Black's other options in the subsequent Games 72-74.

Repertoire Outline

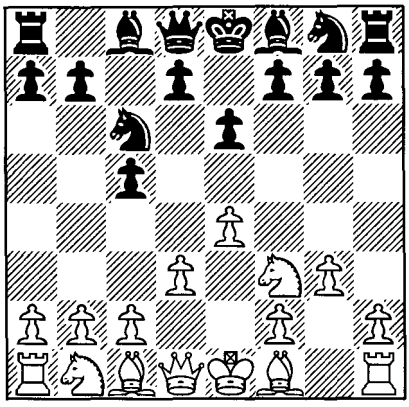
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 ♘c6

Black's usual choice if he doesn't want to go ...d7-d5, but he also has:

a) 3...b6!? is covered in the notes to Game 74.

b) 3...g6 allows 4 d4! which looks very strong – see Game 74.

4 g3



4...g6

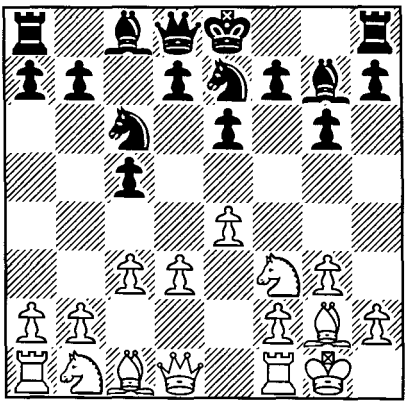
Black copies White and also employs a fianchetto. This is quite a popular and important defence, but there are also:

a) 4...d6 is seen fairly often too, as we'll see in Game 73.

b) 4...♗d6!? looks bizarre and yet was the leading Czech Grandmaster David Navara's choice – see Game 74.

c) 4...♘f6 is likely to transpose to either Navara's variation or to lines considered in our last chapter.

d) 4...♘ge7 cuts out our main idea and after 5 ♗g2 g6 6 0-0 ♗g7 we have a main line position in which we have avoided some of Black's options. Now 7 c3 is the most accurate move order:



d1) 7...e5!? takes the game into a reversed form of the Botvinnik English and has to taken seriously, as it has been played by many strong players – see Game 72.

d2) 7...0-0 8 d4, covered in Game 71, is a critical test and a line which may explain the interest in 7...e5.

5 ♗g5!? ♕b6

Black also has:

a) 5...♗e7 is hardly a refutation – see the notes to Game 67.

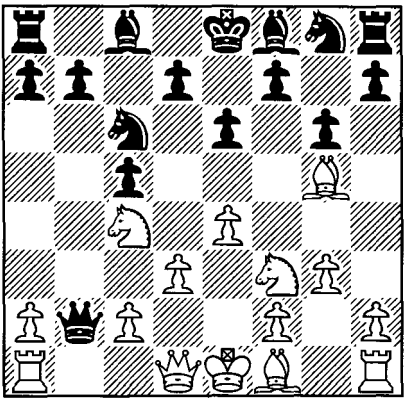
b) 5...f6 will be seen in Game 70.

c) 5...♕c7 has been played against me the most often and is covered in Game 69.

6 ♘bd2 ♕xb2

The critical test. Black has also been known to back down from the challenge, and 6...d6, 6...h6, 6...♗g7 and 6...d5 are all examined in the notes to Game 68.

7 ♘c4



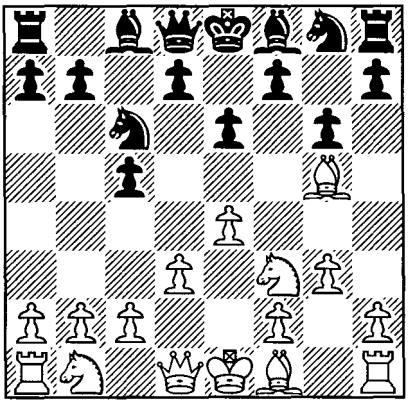
Now:

a) 7...♕c3+ 8 ♗d2 ♕g7 is looked at briefly in Game 67.

b) 7...♕g7 8 ♖b1 is the critical test of the variation and is looked at in both Games 67 and 68.

Game 67
G.Jones-I.Snape
British Championship,
Scarborough 2001

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 ♘c6 4 g3 g6 5 ♗g5!?



A rare line with only 230 games in the *Mega Database 2010*, compared to around 2500 with 5 ♗g2. White immediately exploits the weakened dark squares in Black's camp and forces him to make a concession. If the following lines don't appeal to you then 5 ♗g2 is a safe response when the game is likely to follow similar lines to our play after 4...♘ge7.

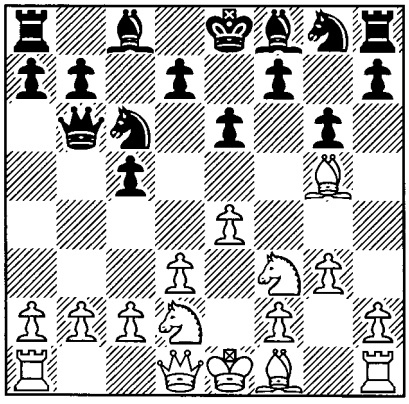
5...♕b6

5...♘ge7 6 ♗f6 is the point, which is simply terrible for Black.

Exchanging the dark-squared bishops with 5...♗e7 is hardly what Black wants either having played ...g6 on the previous move. A recent grandmaster game proceeded 6 h4 h6 7 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 and here in A.Minasian-A.Yegiazarian, Yerevan 2008, rather than the craziness of 8 ♘c3, I think White should have continued with 8 ♗g2 d5 9 ♕e2 ♘f6 10 e5 ♘d7 11 c4, reaching a typical position from the previous chapter but without the dark-squared bishops which should be slightly favourable for White.

Instead 5...♕c7 is looked at in Glek-Short, while 5...f6 will be examined in Glek-Svidler.

6 ♘bd2!

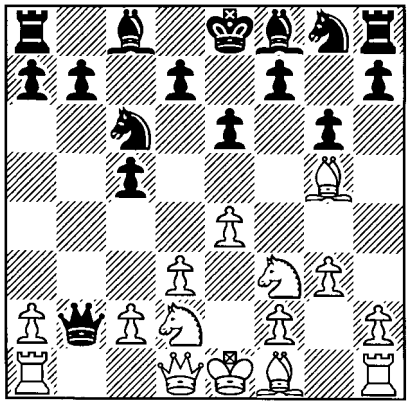


This must be the critical line of 5 ♗g5. We are happy to sacrifice the b-pawn in return for a lead in development and open lines.

If you're reluctant to sacrifice the pawn, then 6 ♕c1 is a possibility. A recent game continued 6...♗g7 7 c3 d5 8 ♗g2 ♘f6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖e1 dxe4 11 dxe4 e5 12 ♘bd2 ♗e6 13 ♗f1 with a typical King's Indian Attack position in V.Nevednichy-D.Brandenburg, Sarajevo 2010.

6...♕xb2

Taking the pawn must be the critical test, although Black's other options are investigated in the following game.

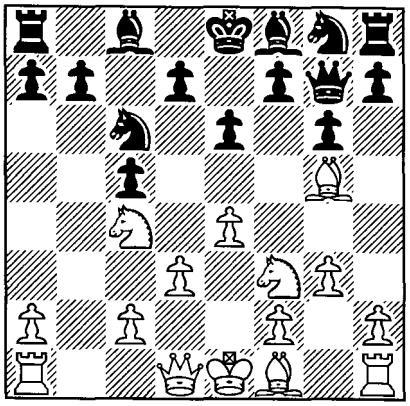


7 ♘c4

7 ♖b1 has also been tried once and I wonder if this could be a possibility, particularly if the 8...d5 of the next game causes White problems. 7...♕xa2 8 ♖a1 ♕b2 9 ♘c4 ♕g7 must be the critical test of this move order. You might reasonably ask me how this can be good for White as we have the same position as we do in the main line, but without our a2-pawn. However, that could be useful as now ...b5 can be met with ♘b6!. Indeed, 10 ♗f4 (threatening 11 ♘b6) 10...♗e7 (now 11 ♘b6 g5! will probably be good for Black) 11 h4 reaches a very interesting unexplored position. I believe White has enough compensation for the

couple of pawns and it will be interesting to see if this idea catches on.

7...♕g7



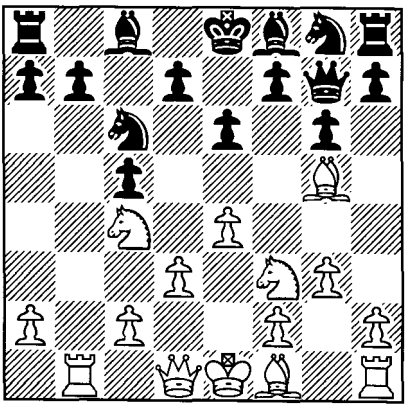
An odd position. At the cost of a pawn we have a comfortable lead in development and we have already placed our knight on the useful c4-square. Meanwhile Black's queen is definitely misplaced on g7 as it gets in the way of his other pieces and does nothing to control the important central squares on d6 and d5. You must be willing to play with a pawn deficit in return for long-term pressure and attacking chances.

Black can also throw in the check on c3, but it's not clear which the better square is for the bishop, d2 or c1. After 7...♕c3+ 8 ♗d2 ♕g7 9 ♖b1 play is going to be very similar to the game continuation. Instead 9 ♗g2 has been played every time this position has been reached, but I'm not sure about 9...b5 10 ♘e3 g5!? when it seems that Black has decent chances in this weird position.

7...♕b5 8 a4 ♕a6 looks frankly ridiculous for Black, as his queen is completely out of the game and White would have a very pleasant edge after 9 e5.

8 ♖b1

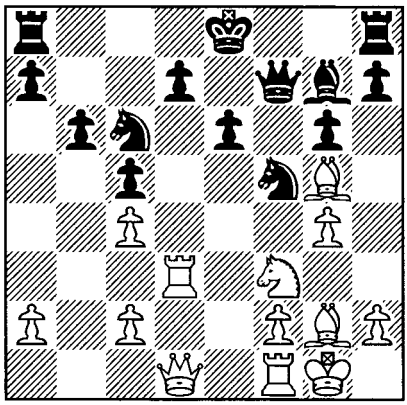
A surprisingly quiet move, but this performs many functions. Primarily we prevent Black expelling our knight from c4 with ...b5. This is especially important as we want to play e4-e5 to clamp Black down with similar ideas to those seen in the previous chapter. A second useful function is that the bishop on c8 is tied down to defending the b7-pawn. Thirdly, our rook is no longer in the sights of the Black queen on g7 so our queen is free to move.



8...d6

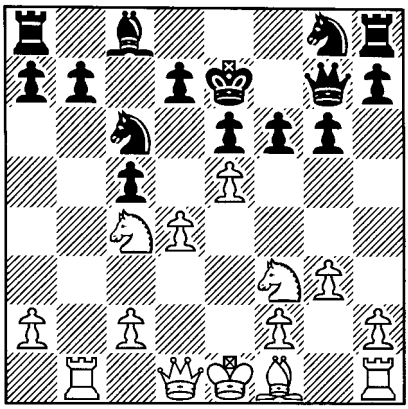
A sensible move and probably the most logical, especially considering our plan is to play e4-e5, but as we see, this does not prevent it. Thus Black might prefer:

a) Perhaps 8...b6 is strongest and was the choice of the respected Polish Grandmaster and theoretician Gajewski. N.Chadaev-G.Gajewski, Kavala 2009, continued 9 ♗g2 ♗a6 10 0-0 f6 (10...♗xc4 11 dxc4 is hard to assess; on the one hand, we're a pawn down and we have a wrecked pawn structure, but it's certainly not that clear cut: White's bishop-pair is very useful and the c-pawns are actually a strength, as the c4-pawn controls the centre and gives us the semi-open b- and d-files down which to attack) 11 ♗d2 ♘h6 12 e5 ♗xc4 13 exf6 ♕xf6 14 dxc4 ♗g7 15 ♖b3 ♘f5 16 ♖d3 ♕e7 17 ♗g5 ♕f7 when 18 g4! would have left Black with severe problems.



Now 18...♘fd4 (or 18...♘h6 19 ♘d2 and Black cannot both keep the h6-knight and prevent ♘d2-e4-d6) 19 c3 h6 (19...♘xf3+ 20 ♖xf3 ♕g8 21 ♖d3 wins) 20 cxd4 hxg5 21 d5 ♘d4 22 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 23 dxe6 ♕f4 24 exd7+ ♔xd7 25 ♕a4+ ♔d8 26 h3 leaves White with a great advantage.

b) 8...♗e7 9 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 10 e5 f6 11 d4! opens up the centre to exploit Black's exposed king.

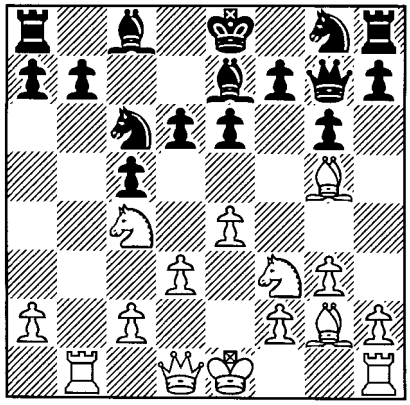


Indeed, 11...cxd4 12 ♘xd4 ♘xe5 13 ♘xe5 fxe5 14 ♘b5 looks very dangerous for Black.

c) 8...f6 expels the bishop, but in return Black will always have weaknesses in his camp: 9 ♗d2 ♕e7 10 ♗g2 (10 ♗f4!? is an interesting switchback) 10...d5 11 ♘e3 d4 12 ♘c4 e5 13 c3 ♗h6 (13...dxc3 should probably have been played to try and put pressure down the d-file and gain the d4-outpost, when the position is very complex) 14 cxd4 ♗xd2+ 15 ♕xd2 cxd4 16 0-0 g5 was reached in D.Bojkov-E.Berg, Kalamaria 2008. I think White should have played on the queenside with 17 ♖fc1 when the open lines on the queenside, a lead in development and Black's weakened king promise White good compensation for the pawn.

d) The critical 8...d5 is examined in the following game.

9 ♗g2 ♗e7



This already seems to be a mistake. Practice has seen too:

a) Black has tried expelling the white bishop at this point with 9...f6 when I quite like the look of 10 ♗c1!?, with ideas of opening up the centre with d3-d4 now that Black's monarch will be unable to find sanctuary: for instance, 10...♖b8 11 a4 (I also like White's prospects after the immediate 11 d4 b5 12 ♘e3 cxd4 13 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 14 ♕xd4) 11...♘h6 12 d4 with a dangerous-looking initiative.

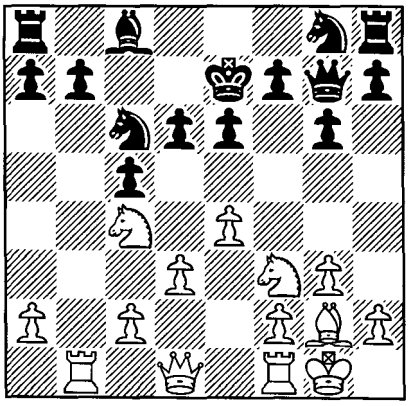
b) 9...h6 10 ♗c1 e5 was P.Marusenko-A.Summerscale, Newport 2000, when I'd choose 11 c3, taking control over some important central squares, preparing d3-d4

and with ideas of playing ♕d1-a4.

10 e5!?

An interesting idea, sacrificing a further pawn to open up the g2-bishop and wreck Black's structure.

However, the simple 10 ♗xe7! ♔xe7 11 0-0! was very strong, bringing our own king to safety before we open up the position. Black doesn't now have enough time to get his king to safety:



a) 11...♘h6 12 d4! cxd4 13 c3 forcing open the position grants White a very strong attack: for example, 13...f5 14 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 15 cxd4 fxe4 16 d5! and it's unlikely the black king will live long enough to see the a8-rook join the game.

b) 11...♘f6 12 e5 dxe5 13 ♘fxe5 ♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 is also very pleasant for White.

c) 11...e5 doesn't prevent our plan of opening the position: 12 d4! ♘xd4 (12...exd4 13 e5! dxe5 14 ♘fxe5 doesn't prevent White getting in at Black's king) 13 ♘xd4 cxd4 14 f4 exf4 (or 14...♘h6 15 fxe5 dxe5 16 ♕d2 and the queen joins in on the a3-f8 diagonal) 15 ♕d2! and although Black has three extra pawns, he won't live long enough to see the fruits of them as every single one of White's pieces is lined up against the naked king.

10...dxe5

10...d5 was stronger, although Black is still worse after 11 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 12 exd6, as his dark squares are so vulnerable.

11 ♗xe7 ♔xe7

11...♘gxe7 12 ♘d6+ ♔f8 13 ♘g5 ♘d8 looks very ugly and it's hard to see how Black should ever coordinate his pieces.

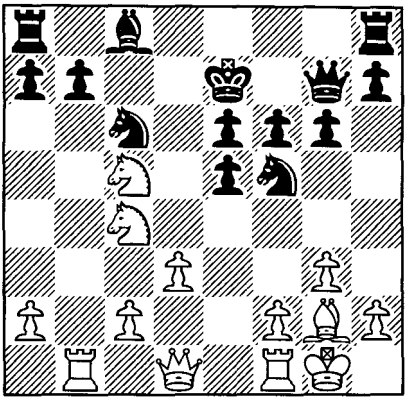
12 0-0

12 ♘g5! was the most dynamic continuation, with the idea of 12...♘f6 13 ♗xc6! bxc6 14 ♕d2! ♘d7 15 ♕a5 and again Black will regret the huge weaknesses on his dark squares. Meanwhile his extra two pawns aren't the most useful pawns I've ever seen.

12...f6 13 ♘fd2 ♘h6 14 ♘e4

I was concerned about giving up my light-squared bishop, but after 14 ♗xc6 bxc6 15 ♕f3 ♗d7 16 ♖b7 it's clear that White is definitely on top.

14...♘f5 15 ♘xc5



So now it's only one pawn and Black still hasn't got very close to either developing his pieces or getting his king to safety.

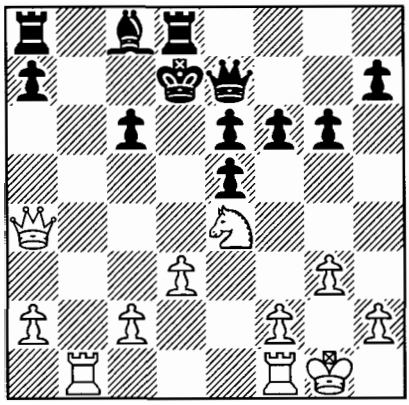
15...♘d6 16 ♗xc6 bxc6 17 ♕f3 ♗d7 18 ♘xd6 ♔xd6 19 ♕e3

Missing an immediate win with 19 d4! exd4 20 ♕a3 and again Black meets death on the dark squares, as 20...♔e7 21 ♘xe6+! ♔xe6 22 ♖fe1+ wins the queen.

19...♗c8 20 ♘e4+

Again opening up the position with 20 d4! was very strong.

20...♔c7 21 ♕c5 ♖d8 22 ♕a5+ ♔d7 23 ♕a4 ♕e7



24 d4!

I finally found the right idea and Black is still in a lot of trouble.

24...exd4 25 ♕xd4+ ♔c7?!

This is the losing mistake, although it was hardly a pleasant position. 25...♔e8 was necessary, but 26 ♕xf6 ♕xf6 27 ♘xf6+ ♔e7 28 ♘xh7 would have left Black a pawn down and White's win should just be a matter of technique.

26 ♕c3 f5? 27 ♕e5+ 1-0

Fittingly the final check is on a dark square, while the c8-bishop and a8-rook never managed to enter the game at all. I think this is a very dangerous line for Black to face and if you go over this game again, you'll notice that Black made only logical-looking moves.

Game 68
L.McShane-A.Volokitin
German League 2008

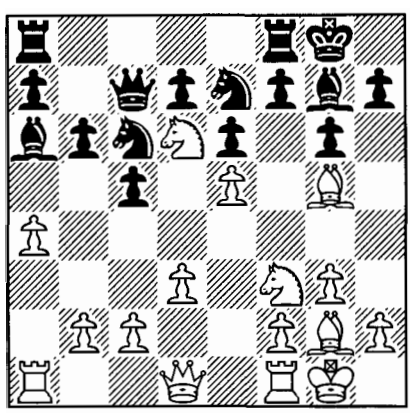
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 ♘c6 4 g3 g6 5 ♗g5 ♕b6 6 ♘bd2 ♕xb2

Once Black has played ...♕b6 I feel he is obliged to take the pawn on b2 as otherwise he's likely to fall a tempo behind on the ...♕c7 lines. Nevertheless, a few other moves have been seen:

a) 6...♗g7 7 ♘c4 ♕c7 8 a4 and now:

a1) 8...♘ge7 9 ♗g2 with a further divide:

a11) 9...0-0 10 e5! (claiming the d6-square and preventing Black from playing the freeing ...d7-d5 break) 10...b6 (10...♘d5 11 0-0! ♘xe5 12 ♘fxe5 ♗xe5 13 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 14 ♗h6 ♖e8 15 ♖e1 ♕d6 does leave Black a pawn up, but he has a lot of problems on his dark squares as well as with completing his development; here the computer recommends the quiet 16 c3!, eyeing up 17 ♕b3 to force that knight to move from d5, while if Black tries 16...♘e7 immediately, then after 17 ♗f4 ♕b6 18 a5 ♕a6 19 d4 he will start to regret the lack of mobility for his queen) 11 0-0 ♗a6 was seen in A.Soltis-L.Christiansen, San Francisco 1998, when the immediate 12 ♘d6 is enough for an edge as e5 is still taboo.



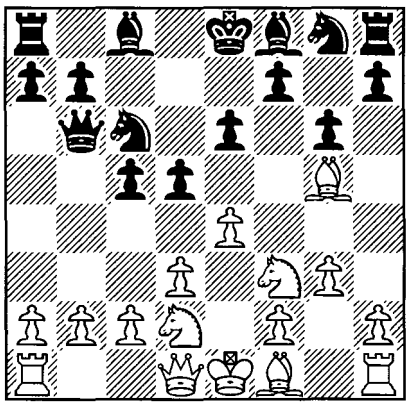
Meanwhile forcing matters doesn't help Black get anywhere closer to equality: 12...♘f5 13 ♘b5 ♗xb5 (13...♕b8 14 g4! ♘fe7 15 ♕d2 leaves Black in a complete bind) 14 axb5 ♘xe5 15 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 16 ♗xa8

♖xa8 17 c3 and Black has nothing like enough compensation, as he cannot win another pawn back with 17...♘xg3? in view of 18 fxg3 ♕xg5 19 ♕f3 ♖f8 20 ♖xa7.

a12) An immediate 9...d5 may be better, although after 10 exd5 Black is forced to recapture with the knight: 10...♘xd5 (10...exd5 11 ♗f4 followed by 12 ♘d6+ is terrible) 11 c3 0-0 12 0-0 and White holds the slightly more pleasant chances as his knight can't be shifted from c4.

a2) 8...d6 9 c3 (the computer offers the interesting possibility of 9 ♗h3!?, the idea being that 9...h6 10 ♗f4 e5 11 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 12 ♗d2 favours White slightly as d5 is vulnerable) 9...♘f6 10 ♗g2 h6 was a game of my own against an Italian IM when I probably should have continued with 11 ♗d2 (instead in G.Jones-D.Contin, Italy 2004, I provoked Black to set his pawn structure immediately with 11 ♗f4!?, but Black was hardly playing ...d6-d5 anyway) 11...0-0 12 0-0 e5 13 ♕c1 ♔h7 14 b4 when I like White with his potential play on both flanks, although Black is fairly solidly placed.

b) 6...d5 has also been seen quite often and generally by high-rated players:



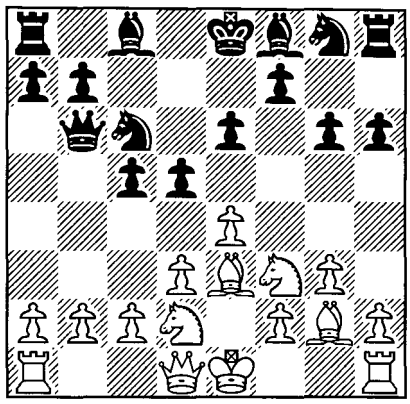
b1) I once tried 7 exd5 here, but after 7...exd5 8 ♕e2+ (8 c4!? looks interesting, but has not been played before: for example, 8...♗e6 9 cxd5 ♗xd5 10 ♗g2 h6 11 ♕e2+ ♗e7 12 ♗f4 and Black may have some problems completing his development) 8...♗e7 9 0-0-0!? ♗g4 Black didn't have too many problems in G.Jones-A.Teitelbaums, Herceg Novi 2005.

b2) 7 ♗g2 makes more sense:

b21) 7...♕xb2 can be met by the straightforward 8 0-0 when Black will regret having neglected his development, a recurring theme.

b22) 7...♗g7 8 0-0 h6 9 exd5 exd5 10 ♖e1+ ♘ge7 11 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 12 c4! ♕d8 13 ♕a4+ ♗d7 14 ♕a3 0-0 15 ♕xc5 ♗e6 16 cxd5 ♘xd5 was B.Macieja-T.Markowski, Warsaw 2003, and here 17 ♘d4! ♘f4 18 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 19 ♕a3 ♕d4 20 ♖ad1 would have left White a pawn up for insufficient compensation.

b23) 7...h6 8 ♗e3:



b231) 8...♗g7 9 exd5 exd5 10 ♘b3! leaves Black facing problems with his dark squares, in particular the c5-pawn: 10...d4 11 ♗f4 ♗e6 12 ♘fd2 ♘f6 13 0-0 ♖d8? (a natural-looking move to prevent the bishop infiltrating on d6, but White has a deadly riposte) 14 ♖e1 0-0 15 ♖xe6! fxe6 16 ♘c4 ♕a6 17 ♘xc5 ♕b5 18 ♘xe6 1-0, M.Turov-J.Cappon, Cappelle la Grande 2003.

b232) 8...♕xb2 9 exd5 exd5 10 0-0 looks exceedingly risky for Black as White has completed his development whilst he has developed just one knight.

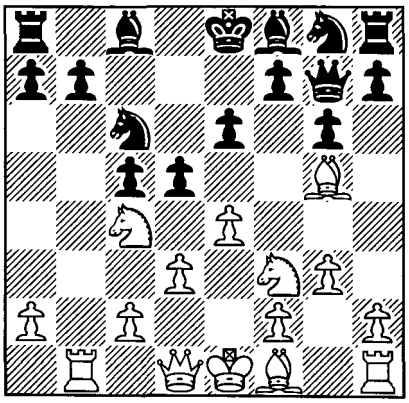
b33) 8...♘f6 9 0-0 ♕d8 was A.David-A.Istratescu, French League 2003, when it was time to open up the position with 10 exd5 ♘xd5 (10...exd5 11 ♘b3 d4 12 ♗d2 would again leave Black's king with e-file problems) 11 ♕e2 ♘xe3 12 ♕xe3 and White's lead in development leaves him for preference. It's still difficult to see how Black should complete his development.

c) 6...d6 was the current American no.2's choice, but is rather passive: 7 ♗g2!? (7 ♘c4 is fine) 7...♗g7 was A.Stripunsky-G.Kamsky,G Philadelphia 2006, when 8 0-0 was the most logical, as Kamsky was hardly threatening 8...♕xb2 9 ♖b1 ♕xa2 10 ♘c4! with a huge initiative. Indeed, d6 cannot even be defended as 10...♔d7? 11 e5 followed by 12 ♖a1 would pick up the queen.

d) 6...h6 7 ♘c4 ♕c7 was P.Zarnicki-E.Berg, Internet (blitz) 2004, when I think White should retreat the bishop all the way back to d2: 8 ♗d2 ♗g7 9 ♗g2 with a typical position for the line.

Returning to the critical pawn grab, 6...♕xb2:

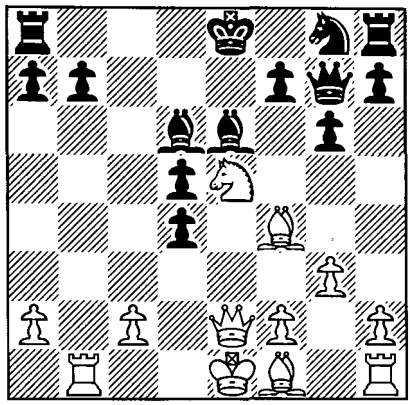
7 ♘c4 ♕g7 8 ♖b1 d5



A risky move opening up the centre while Black is behind in development. He will have to play extremely accurately to have any hopes of converting his extra pawn and in the meantime one error will result in being mated. As we see here, one of the top hundred players in the world isn't up to the task.

9 exd5 exd5 10 ♕e2+ ♗e7

Meyer suggests 10...♗e6 in his annotations for ChessBase and perhaps it's a better try to fight off White's initiative. The position is extremely messy and Black must navigate his way through a number of traps after 11 ♘ce5 ♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 ♗d6 13 d4! cxd4 (13...♗xe5? fails to 14 ♕b5+! ♗d7 15 ♕xb7, as 15...♖b8 16 ♕xb8+ ♗xb8 17 ♖xb8+ ♗c8 18 ♗b5+ mates) 14 ♗f4.

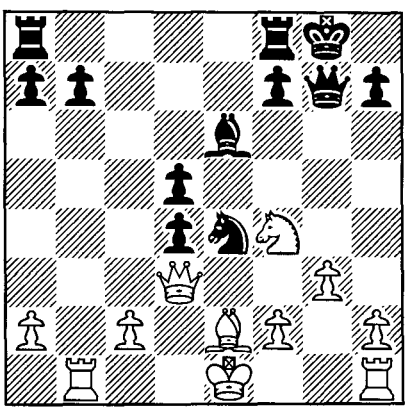


And now:

a) 14...♘e7 15 ♕b5+ (this looks to give Black a lot of problems; instead 15 ♘xg6!? ♘xg6 16 ♗xd6 0-0-0 17 ♗c5 ♖he8 18 ♔d1 is extremely unclear with neither king too happy) 15...♔f8 16 ♘xg6+ ♕xg6 17 ♗xd6 ♕e4+ 18 ♔d2 ♕xh1 19 ♗xe7+ ♔g8 (highly illogical but Black's only move, since 19...♔xe7? loses to 20 ♕b4+ as the king cannot go to a light square, and 19...♔g7?! 20 ♕b4! is also extremely dangerous) 20 ♕xb7 (20 ♕b4 ♕xh2 21 ♕xd4 also looks like

very good compensation to me) 20...♖c8 21 ♕xa7 ♗f5 22 ♕xd4 (22 ♗d3!? ♕xb1 23 ♗xf5 isn't a ridiculous winning plan either; on such a board the bishops look to be at least an equal match for the rooks and Black still has big problems on the kingside) 22...♖xc2+ 23 ♔e3 h5 24 ♖b8+ ♖c8 25 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 26 ♗f8 ♖h7 27 ♗d3 ♕c1+ 28 ♔f3 ♕h1+ 29 ♔f4!? (29 ♔e3 is of course a draw) 29...♕c1+ 30 ♕e3 ♕xe3+ 31 fxe3 ♖h8 32 ♗c5 and Black still has to suffer in the endgame, as the bishop-pair and the a-pawn are extremely strong.

b) 14...♘f6 15 ♘xg6 ♗xf4 16 ♘xf4 (this seems safer than taking the rook: 16 ♘xh8 d3 17 ♕xd3 ♗d6 18 ♗g2 ♕xh8 19 0-0 b6 20 c4 ♔f8 21 cxd5 ♗d7 is given by Meyer and he assesses this position as slightly better for Black, although it still isn't clear as Black's king hasn't found complete safety) 16...0-0 17 ♕d3 ♘e4 (17...♗g4 18 ♗e2 is fine) 18 ♗e2 is still rather unclear.

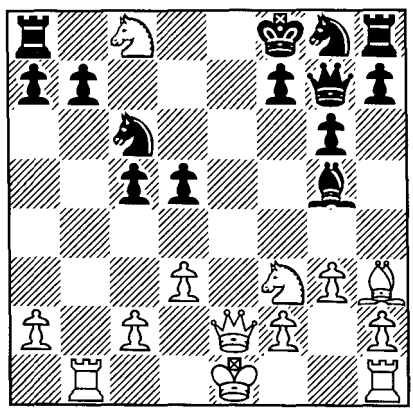


Initially the computer loves Black, but then it calms down and states it's roughly equal. Black has an extra pawn, but d4 and d5 are both vulnerable while I think it's easier playing White with our safer king. This is probably the critical test of the pawn sacrifice, which we initiated with 5 ♗g5, but Black has to find his way through a labyrinth to this position. I don't think we should be unhappy here anyway. The game might proceed 18...♖ac8 19 0-0 ♕e5 20 ♖fe1 b6 21 ♗f1 ♖c3 22 ♕d1 ♖fc8 23 ♗d3 and White has a rock-solid position and can start to try and exploit Black's king.

11 ♘d6+ ♔f8 12 ♘xc8 ♗xg5

12...♖xc8 13 ♗h3 ♖e8 14 ♗d7 is another line given by Meyer in which White has good chances, as he is winning back his sacrificed pawn and retains the initiative.

13 ♗h3



13...♕c3+

In such a complicated position it's not surprising that even very strong grandmasters make mistakes, but after this move McShane is doing very well.

Volokitin should have taken a time out to play 13...b6!!:

a) It's hard to see here that the bishop isn't really en prise, but after 14 ♘xg5?! ♘d4 15 ♕d2 (15 ♕d1 ♕e5+) 15...h6 Black wins back his piece and stands quite well.

b) 14 0-0! ♘d4 (or 14...♕f6 15 ♗d7 ♔g7 16 h4 ♗h6 17 ♖fe1 and White still has good compensation as Black will struggle to complete his development) 15 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 16 ♘d6 ♗f6 (16...♘f6? 17 ♘b5 ♕a4 18 ♕e5 wins, while 16...♖d8 17 ♘b5 ♕a4 18 ♕e5 ♗f6 19 ♕c7 also looks very scary for Black)

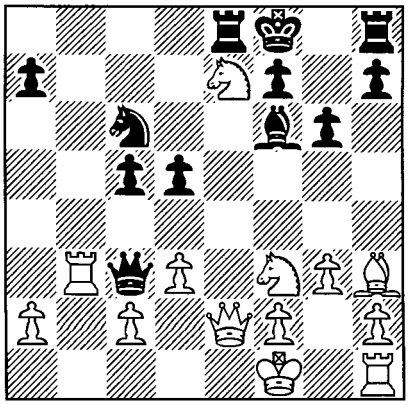
17 ♖fe1, as given by Meyer, leaves White on top despite his pawn deficit as Black is playing without his kingside pieces.

14 ♔f1

The problem is now that g5 really is en prise and thus Black doesn't have enough time to save b7.

14...♘d4

14...♗f6 would be Black's other option: 15 ♖xb7 (a curious position with the kings on f1 and f8, but White has kept his development advantage as well as winning back his extra pawn and so stands significantly better) 15...♘ge7 16 ♘xe7 ♖e8 and here, rather than Meyer's 17 ♔g2, White has a very strong possibility in 17 ♖b3!.



Here 17...♕a1+ is forced, as 17...♕a5 18 ♘xc6! hits the queen and thus leaves White with far too much extra material, while 17...♖xe7 18 ♖xc3 ♖xe2 19 ♖xc5 is also absolutely hopeless for Black. However, after 18 ♔g2 ♕xa2 19 ♕e3! ♕xc2 (the only real try as 19...♗xe7 20 ♗d7 and 19...♖xe7 20 ♕xc5 both leave White with a decisive advantage) 20 ♕f4! ♗xe7 21 ♗e6 ♘d8 22 ♗xf7! ♔g7 (neither 22...♘xf7 23 ♘e5 nor 22...♕xb3 23 ♗xd5+ are playable alternatives) 23 ♗xd5 and White is in total control. Material is level, but both Black's king and queen are in desperate trouble, while the a- and c-pawns are likely to drop off very soon. White is winning here.

15 ♘xd4?!

This lets Black back into the game.

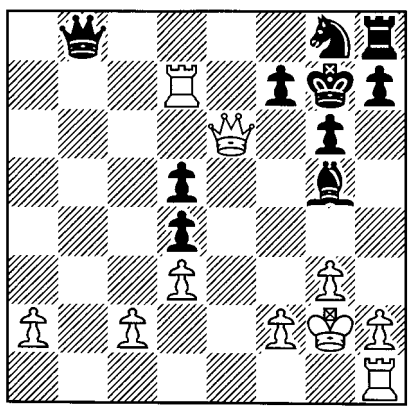
Instead 15 ♕e5! would have been very awkward for the Ukrainian to deal with: 15...♗f6 (15...♕xc2 16 ♘xg5 ♕xb1+ 17 ♔g2 wins as Black's king has no cover) 16 ♕xd5 (Meyer assesses this position as only a little better for White, but Black has to be play very accurately not to collapse) 16...♕xc2 17 ♔g2! ♖xc8! (17...♕xd3? highlights the dangers in Black's position: 18 ♖b3! ♕a6 19 ♕xc5+ wins a piece) 18 ♗xc8 ♘e7 19 ♕xb7 ♘xc8 20 ♕xc8+ ♔g7 21 ♕b7 ♕xd3 22 ♖hd1 ♕f5 23 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 24 ♕f3 and White is clearly better with his extra exchange.

15...cxd4 16 ♖xb7 ♕c6

This wins two minor pieces for the rook, but leaves White on top.

16...♖xc8! should have been played which seems to equalize: 17 ♕g4! (17 ♗xc8 ♕xc8 18 ♖xa7 ♕b8 19 ♖d7 is messy, but Black shouldn't be worse with his two minor pieces against the rook) 17...♖c7 18 ♖b8+ ♔g7 19 ♕xg5 ♘e7 20 ♖xh8 ♔xh8 is given as equal by Meyer, although I'd still prefer to be on the white side.

17 ♖xa7 ♖xc8 18 ♗xc8 ♕xc8 19 ♔g2 ♕b8 20 ♖d7 ♔g7 21 ♕e6



21...♘e7

This leaves Black technically lost. Black had to try and retain the material imbalance with 21...♘h6, although after 22 ♕xd5 ♗f6 23 ♖e1 ♕a8 (Meyer) 24 ♖b1! would have left a horrible defensive task in store.

22 ♖xe7 ♗xe7 23 ♕xe7 ♖c8 24 ♖e1 ♖xc2 25 a3?!

This gives Black some hope. It was time to transform one advantage into another with 25 ♖e6! ♖xa2 26 ♖d6 ♖a8 27 ♕e5+ ♔g8 28 ♕xd5 ♕e8 29 ♖d7 which would have been winning for White.

25...♖c6 26 ♖e2 ♖a6 27 h4 h5 28 ♕c5 ♕b6 29 ♕xb6 ♖xb6 30 ♖a2 ♖b3?!

A mistake in time trouble. The king had to be activated: 30...♔f6 31 a4 ♔e5 32 a5 ♖a6 would of course leave White with the upper hand in the endgame, but in-depth analysis indicates the position is a draw. This endgame is rather outside the scope of this book and let's just say that Black would still have had certain practical problems.

31 a4!

Now the pawn is too fast.

31...♖xd3?

The rook had to come back to stop the pawn when perhaps Black could still have held the draw. Meyer's main line runs 31...♖b6 32 a5 ♖a6 33 ♔f3 ♔f8 34 ♔f4 f6 35 g4 hxg4 36 ♔xg4 ♔f7 37 f4 ♔e7 and it appears that White cannot make progress after 38 f5 ♔f7 39 fxg6+ ♔xg6 40 h5+ ♔h6 41 ♔f5 ♔g7 42 ♖a1 ♔h7.

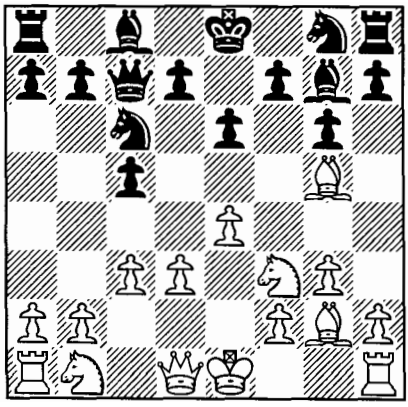
32 a5 ♖c3 33 a6 d3 34 ♔f3 ♖c2 35 ♖a4 ♖c1 36 ♔e3 ♖d1 37 a7 d4+ 38 ♔xd4 d2 1-0

Game 69
I.Glek-N.Short
Cap d'Agde (rapid) 1996

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 ♘c6 4 g3 g6 5 ♗g5 ♕c7

The move I've had to face the most. Black declines to grab the pawn and just tries to develop as normal.

6 ♗g2 ♗g7 7 c3



I've tried a few different moves here, but I think this is most in keeping with the lines we have examined in this and the previous chapter. The positions in this line are quite similar to the last two games of the previous chapter, as well as some upcoming games in this one.

7...♘ge7

Black has tried many different moves here, but most of them result in very similar positions:

a) 7...d6 is likely to transpose to either variation 'd' or our main game, depending on what Black does with his king's knight.

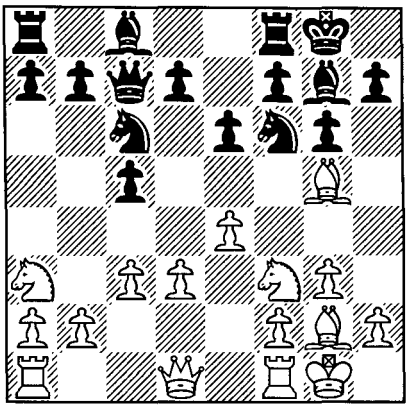
b) 7...b6 can be met by 8 ♘a3.

c) 7...d5 will probably transpose to positions very similar to Morozevich-Gleizerov after something like 8 ♕e2 (8 exd5!? exd5 9 0-0 ♘ge7 10 d4 also looks a little better for White) 8...♘ge7 9 0-0 h6 10 ♗f4 ♕d8 11 h4 when we have the same position as there except that White has already played ♗f4.

d) 7...e5 is very similar to Bruzon-Andersson seen in a few pages. The bishop being on g5 and queen being on c7 doesn't

change too much. Another game by the brilliant Russian continued 8 0-0 d6 9 ♘a3 (we saw this deployment in the last chapter) 9...h6 10 ♘b5!? (10 ♗e3 would be more normal, not allowing Black to hit the knight away) 10..♕d7 11 ♗e3 ♘ge7 (evidently Morozevich was happy should Black play 11...a6 as following the knight retreat there would be a big hole on b6) 12 d4! ♘xd4 13 ♘bxd4 cxd4 14 cxd4 0-0 15 ♕d2 exd4?! (this drops a pawn but Black's position was already unpleasant) 16 ♗xh6 ♘c6 17 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 18 ♘xd4 and White had a clear extra pawn in A.Morozevich-B.Gulko Moscow (rapid) 1995.

e) 7...♘f6 has been the high-rated choice here, despite it being a little strange to mix ...e6 and ...♘f6. The simplest seems to be 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♘a3 with a typical position in which the knight being on f6 rather than e7 doesn't change very much.



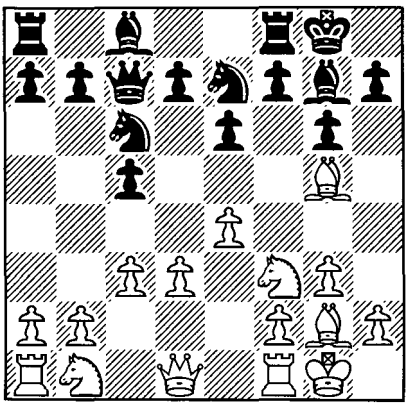
Here 9...h6 10 ♗e3 d6 11 h3 ♕e7 12 ♕d2 ♔h7 was Zhang Zhong-Tong Yuanming, Beijing 1998, when perhaps White should try expanding on the queenside with 13 b4.

f) 7...b5 was tried in a recent game, but following 8 0-0 ♘ge7 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 d5 11 exd5 ♘xd5 12 ♘c3 ♘xc3 13 bxc3 0-0 14 ♗f4 ♕b6 15 ♘e5 Black was forced to cede his dark-squared bishop with a clearly worse position, N.Chadaev-A.Stukopin, Moscow 2010.

8 0-0 d5

Again there are alternatives:

a) 8...0-0 with a pleasant choice for White:



a1) White can take over the centre with 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 d5 11 e5 ♕b6 (11...f6 isn't very palatable with the bishop on g5, as 12 exf6 ♗xf6 13 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 14 ♘c3 leaves White with a small but concrete advantage, due to Black's weakened dark squares and blocked-in bishop) 12 ♕d2 ♘f5 13 ♖d1 h6 14 ♗f6 ♗xf6 15 exf6 ♕d8 16 g4 ♘d6 17 ♕xh6 (17 ♕f4!? could be considered as after 17...♘e4 18 ♕xh6 ♕xf6 19 ♘bd2 White gains time on the black knight) 17...♕xf6 18 ♘c3 b6 19 h4 and in I.Glek-H.Kuijf, Holland 1996, White had good attacking chances.

a2) Of course 9 ♘a3 can again be considered when 9...h6 10 ♗e3 b6 11 d4 cxd4 12 ♘b5 ♕b8 13 cxd4 a6 14 ♘c3 left White with a comfortable advantage thanks to his big centre in A.Poluljahov-V.Dimitrov, Vrnjacka Banja 1996.

a3) If you don't feel like opening the centre immediately then you could follow my choice of 9 ♕d2 d5 10 ♖e1 dxe4 11 dxe4 ♖d8 12 ♕e2 h6 13 ♗e3 b6 14 ♘a3 a6 15 ♖ad1 ♗b7 16 ♗f4 e5 17 ♗c1 b5 18 ♘c2

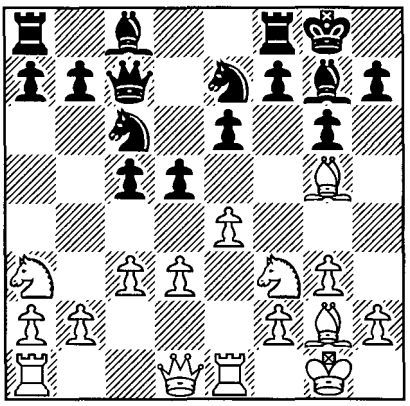
♘a5 19 ♘e3 and I slowly engineered a successful kingside attack which granted me my first Grandmaster norm in G.Jones-G.Sarakauskas, Liverpool 2006.

b) 8...d6 9 d4 (again 9 ♘a3 is a fully playable alternative, although there's no reason not to grab the centre) 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 h6 (or 10...♕b6 11 ♘c3 ♕xb2 – 11...♘xd4? 12 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 13 ♕xd4 ♗xd4 14 ♘b5 is very strong – 12 ♕d3 ♕a3 13 ♕d2 a6 14 ♖fc1 d5 15 ♖ab1 leaves White with very good compensation for the pawn) 11 ♗f4 (Emms points out that 11 ♗e3 can be dealt with by 11...d5, but perhaps White can seize the initiative here with 12 exd5 ♘xd5 – 12...exd5 13 ♘c3 should be a little better for White – 13 ♘c3!? ♘xe3 14 fxe3 0-0 15 ♖c1 when he has the centre and useful lines for his rook, although Black is fairly solid and has the bishop-pair) 11...e5 (A.Shchekachev-D.Kuzuev, St Petersburg 1998), and here we should follow Emms' suggestion with 12 ♗e3. The game might proceed 12...♗g4 13 d5 ♘d4 14 ♘a3 0-0 15 ♖c1 ♕b6 16 ♗xd4 exd4 17 ♘c4 ♕a6 18 a4 when White is slightly for preference.

9 ♘a3

9 ♖e1 has been the main move and can transpose.

9...0-0 10 ♖e1



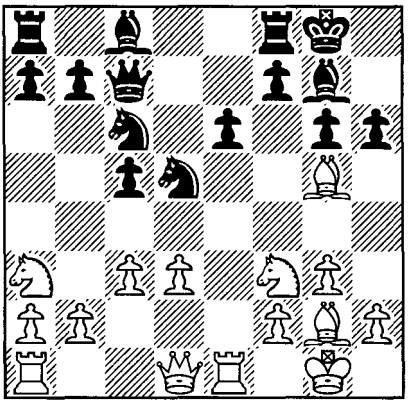
10...h6

In a couple of later games Black has tried 10...a6 11 ♕d2 f6 12 ♗h6 (12 ♗e3 also looks interesting as after 12...b6 13 exd5 ♘xd5 14 d4! I believe White has something) and then:

a) 12...d4?! looks very ugly and was blown away after 13 cxd4 cxd4 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 15 e5! f5 (or 15...♘xe5 16 ♘xe5 fxe5 17 ♖ac1 ♘c6 18 ♘c4 and White wins back his sacrificed pawn, leaving Black with a decimated structure) 16 ♖ac1 ♖d8 17 ♕g5 and White was in total control with both tactical and positional assets in M.Becker-S.Kaphle, Dresden 2007.

b) 12...♖d8 13 ♗xg7 was agreed drawn in M.Becker-B.Malich, German League 2004, but there's still play left in the position and I'd prefer White after 13...♔xg7 14 exd5 ♘xd5 (14...exd5 15 ♘c2 followed by d3-d4 leaves White with a superior pawn structure) 15 d4!? (of course this isn't forced and White could continue to play slowly: for example, 15 ♕e2 e5 16 ♘d2 ♗e6 17 ♘ac4) 15...cxd4 16 cxd4 when Black has slight problems with his king and e6-pawn.

11 exd5! ♘xd5



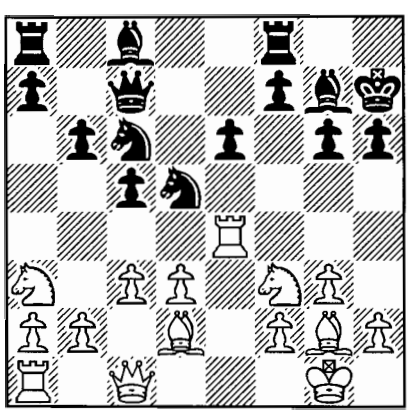
11...exd5 is the preferable positional recapture, but here after 12 ♗f4 ♕b6 13 ♕b3 Black is under uncomfortable pressure: for

example, 13...♗e6 14 ♕xb6 axb6 15 ♘b5 when Black has no real targets for counterplay and he has to watch out for his vulnerable pawns.

12 ♗d2 b6 13 ♕c1

I actually reached this position via a different move order in a recent Olympiad game, but I have to confess I didn't realise we'd transposed to the same position! I came up with 13 d4!? cxd4 14 c4!? (objectively not the best move but it causes Black to solve some problems; instead 14 ♘b5 ♕d7 15 ♘bxd4 ♘xd4 16 cxd4 ♗b7 17 ♘e5 is a little better for White, but I didn't feel like playing with an isolated queen's pawn) 14...♘de7 15 ♗f4 ♕d8 (15...♕d7 16 ♕d2 g5 17 ♗e5 gives White decent compensation for the pawn, but the position is very messy) 16 ♘b5 ♗b7 17 ♘fxd4 a6 18 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 19 ♘c3 ♗xg2 20 ♔xg2 ♕xd1 21 ♖axd1 ♗xc3 22 bxc3 ♖fc8 23 ♖d7 ♘f5 24 ♖b1 and I had a pleasant edge although failed to convert in G.Jones-K.Stupak, Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010.

13...♔h7 14 ♖e4!



Black is facing unpleasant threats.

14...f6

14...♘de7 is Smirin's suggestion, but it doesn't stop 15 ♖h4 as after the intended 15...♘f5 comes 16 ♖h3! when Black has no defence to 17 g4.

Thus perhaps the committal 14...g5 is best, but Black's position is rather loose. I quite like 15 ♕e1!? here, with the devilish idea that the logical 15...♗a6 can be met by 16 ♗xg5! hxg5 17 ♘xg5+ ♔g8 18 ♖xe6! with an extremely dangerous attack.

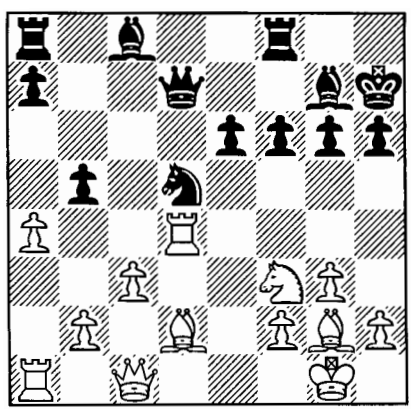
15 d4!

Now that Short has blocked in his g7-bishop, it's time to open up the centre.

15...cxd4 16 ♘b5

16 ♘xd4 can also be considered as 16...♘xd4 17 ♖xd4 ♗b7 18 ♘b5 ♕d7 19 c4 f5 20 ♖h4 (20 ♖d3!? is possible too) 20...h5 21 ♕e1 is great for White.

16...♕d7 17 ♘bxd4 ♘xd4 18 ♖xd4 b5 19 a4!



As in Jones-Snape, Black has failed to develop his queenside pieces and thus is in a lot of trouble. Indeed here Black is losing a pawn by force as there are too many pins.

19...♗b7 20 axb5 e5 21 ♖h4

21 ♖da4 immediately is also possible.

21...g5 22 ♖ha4 f5 23 ♖xa7

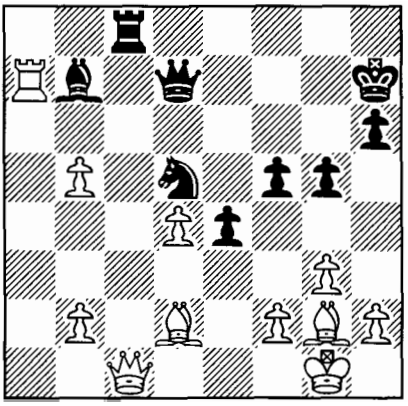
23 c4 looks the easiest win: 23...e4 (23...♘b6 24 ♖xa7 again leaves Black in too many pins) 24 cxd5 exf3 25 ♗xf3 ♕xb5 26 ♗c3 and Black is a pawn down whilst his king position is also a severe issue.

23...♖xa7 24 ♖xa7 e4 25 ♘d4

Again 25 c4 could be considered, ex-

ploiting all the pins.

25...♗xd4 26 cxd4 ♖c8



27 ♕a1

27 ♕f1 ♖c2 28 ♕d1 ♖xb2 29 ♗f1 to retain the advanced b-pawn was slightly more accurate, but we should take into account this was a rapid game. At the least it has been a definite opening success for White. Glek started a kingside attack from seemingly nothing and this game shows that even a former World Championship contender (this game was played just three years after Short's match against Kasparov) can struggle with the questions posed by 5 ♗g5!?.

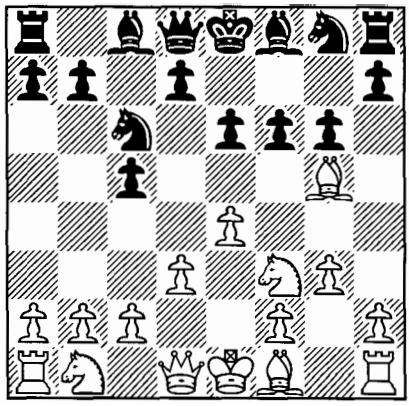
27...♕xb5 28 ♗f1 ♕c6 29 ♕a6 ♖c7 30 ♕xc6 ♗xc6 31 ♖a5 ♖b7 32 b4 ♘xb4 33 ♖c5 ♗d7 34 ♗xb4 ♖xb4 35 ♖c7 ♖xd4 36 ♗b5 ♔g6 37 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 38 ♗xd7 f4 39 g4 ♔f6 40 ♔f1 ♔e5 41 ♔e2 ♔d4 42 ♔d2 ♔c4 43 ♗f5 ♔d4 44 ♗g6 ♔e5 45 ♔c3 e3 46 fxe3 fxe3 47 ♗d3 h5 48 h3 ♔f4 49 ♗e2 h4 50 ♔d4 ♔g3 51 ♔xe3 ♔xh3 52 ♔e4 ♔g3 53 ♔f5 1-0

Game 70
I.Glek-P.Svidler
Mainz (rapid) 2002

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 ♘c6 4 g3 g6 5 ♗g5

This game was played six years after the last one and it's encouraging to see Glek keeping faith with this line against the world's elite.

5...f6

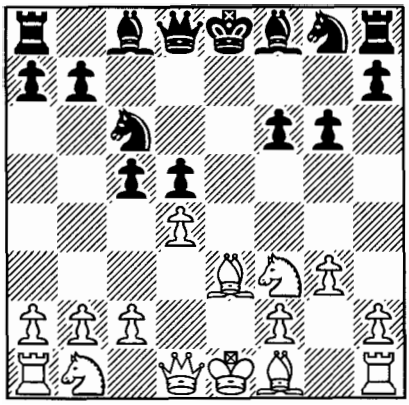


This move has been the theoretical suggestion for Black, but to be honest I have never fully trusted it. White is forced to move his bishop again, but Black's kingside will prove vulnerable for the rest of the game. I like trying to break with d3-d4 here, as ...f7-f6 will prove a big weakness on an open board.

6 ♗d2!?

This is rarer than 7 ♗e3 and has only been played four times on my database, but with a 100% score!

I have always plumped for the main move 6 ♗e3 when I've reached this position: 6...d5 (6...♘ge7 was tried against me once, but following 7 ♘c3 d6 8 d4! cxd4 9 ♘xd4 in G.Jones-M.Fischer, Belfort 2005, Black's extra tempo ...f6 was definitely not wanted in an Open Sicilian-type position) 7 exd5 exd5 8 d4 is obviously the critical test. White must open up the board or else the tempo invested in provoking ...f6 won't be worth it. I suggest if you choose 7 ♗e3, you should do some work on your own in this position:



a) 8...♗g4 9 ♗e2 ♘ge7 10 dxc5 ♘f5 11 ♘d4!? was a game of my own against the very creative and aggressive Grandmaster Simon Williams:

a1) Here he played 11...♘xe3 12 fxe3 ♗xe2 13 ♕xe2 ♗xc5 14 ♘c3 ♕e7 15 ♘xd5 ♕e5 16 ♘e6!? (16 c4 was more straightforward with a small edge) 16...♔f7 17 ♘ef4 ♖he8 18 0-0 ♔g7 19 ♖ae1 and in G.Jones-S.Williams, Bunratty 2006, I'd consolidated my extra pawn, but partly due to the fact that it was 90 minutes for all the moves and that it was a Sunday morning game, things soon started going wrong!

a2) However, I think 11...♗xe2 is stronger when 12 ♕xe2 ♘cxd4 13 ♗xd4+ ♔f7 14 ♗c3 ♗xc5 15 0-0 would reach an unclear position where Black's lead in development compensates for his worse structure.

b) 8...♘ge7!? was Svidler's choice in a later game: 9 ♗g2 (perhaps 9 ♘c3 should be played with an extremely complicated position after 9...♗g4 10 ♗e2 ♘f5 11 ♗f4) 9...♘f5 (9...♕b6 looks critical when perhaps Ivanchuk was intending to sacrifice the pawn, but following 10 0-0 ♕xb2 11 ♘bd2 c4 I'm sceptical that there's enough compensation; White can try 12 ♘xc4!? dxc4 13 d5, but the complications seem to come down on Black's side: for example, 13...♘b4 14 ♖b1 ♕xc2 15 ♖xb4 ♕xd1 16 ♖xd1 ♘xd5 17 ♖xc4 ♘xe3 18 fxe3 ♗h6 when Black has the advantage) 10 0-0 ♘xe3 11 fxe3 ♗h6 and in V.Ivanchuk-P.Svidler, Monte Carlo (blindfold) 2005, Black could be happy with his opening experiment.

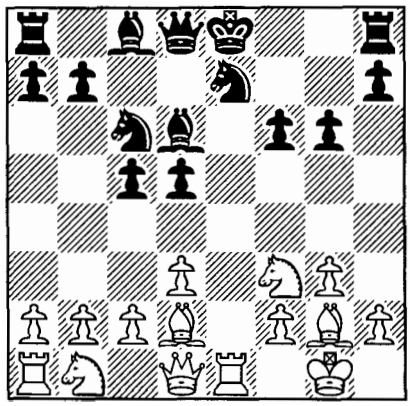
6...d5 7 ♗g2 ♗d6

Black has tried different moves here every time the position has been reached:

a) I doubt 7...d4 will be repeated as White has the strong reply 8 e5!, an idea we have already seen, cutting across Black's expansion ideas and leaving him with two backward e-pawns: 8...fxe5 9 ♕e2 ♗g7 10 ♘a3 ♘ge7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♘c4 ♕c7 13 ♖fe1 ♖f5 14 ♗h3 b5 15 ♗xf5 gxf5 16 ♘cxe5 ♘xe5 17 ♘xe5 and White is clearly better, Zhou Weiqi-Yu Yangyi, Beijing 2009.

b) 7...♗g7 8 0-0 ♘ge7 9 exd5 exd5 10 ♖e1 0-0 11 ♘c3 ♗d7 was M.Becker-A.Markgraf, Osterburg 2006, and here I think White should prepare b4 with 12 a3 ♔h8 13 ♖b1 when White has a pleasant edge as the pawn on f6 really gets in the way for Black.

8 0-0 ♘ge7 9 exd5 exd5 10 ♖e1



A normal position has arisen except for the fact that Black has advanced both his f- and g-pawns. These kingside holes promise

White a visible advantage.

10...♔f7 11 ♘c3 ♖e8

11...♔g7 12 ♘b5 ♗b8 13 c4 is also pleasant.

12 h3

This game was a rapid one and around here I think Glek was just trying to play some moves quickly and so gain some time on the clock. He might have considered:

a) 12 ♗h6 is an interesting alternative:

a1) 12...♔g8 13 d4 is very strong.

a2) 12...♘f5 13 ♕d2 ♖xe1+ (13...g5 14 ♘xg5+! fxg5 15 ♖xe8 ♔xe8 16 ♖e1+ is very good for White) 14 ♖xe1 g5 15 ♗xg5 fxg5 16 ♘xg5+ ♔g7 17 ♗xd5 would give White three pawns and a strong initiative for the piece.

a3) 12...♗e6 is probably best, although 13 ♕d2 (13 ♖xe6!? looks interesting, but I can't quite find a kill) 13...♕d7 14 ♘b5 ♗b8 (14...♘f5 15 ♘xd6+ is a small but safe edge for White) 15 d4 a6 16 ♘c3 cxd4 17 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 18 ♕xd4 ♘f5 19 ♕d2 g5 20 ♕d3! keeps the piece and threatens 21 g4 with the advantage.

b) 12 ♗c1!? is a bizarre suggestion by the computer, but it has some sense behind it. White is preparing d3-d4 while also having ideas of ♕d2-h6 in certain circumstances.

c) 12 ♘b5 ♗b8 13 c4 also looks sensible when White has some advantage.

12...♗e6 13 a3 ♕d7 14 ♔h2 ♔g7 15 ♖b1

Black must be absolutely fine now as he has successfully coordinated his pieces, but it's amazing how it all goes wrong so fast.

15...a6?

This is a big error as the hole on b6 allows White to kick-start his attack.

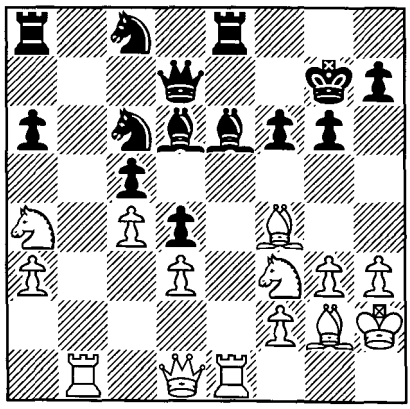
16 ♘a4! ♘c8 17 b4 b6

17...cxb4 18 axb4 b6 was the lesser evil, although White's back on top.

18 bxc5 bxc5 19 c4 d4?!

In light of what follows, Black should have exchanged, 19...dxc4 20 dxc4 ♖b8, but White is a little better following 21 ♖xb8 ♘xb8 22 ♗e3 ♗xc4 23 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 24 ♗xc5 and the bishop-pair gives him promising chances on the open board.

20 ♗f4!



A surprising shot. Suddenly c5 is impossible to defend.

20...♗e7

20...♗xf4 21 ♘xc5 ♕d6 22 ♖b7+ ♔h6 23 ♘e4 ♕f8 24 gxf4 would net a pawn and keep up a strong attack.

21 ♘d2 g5 22 ♕f3! 1-0

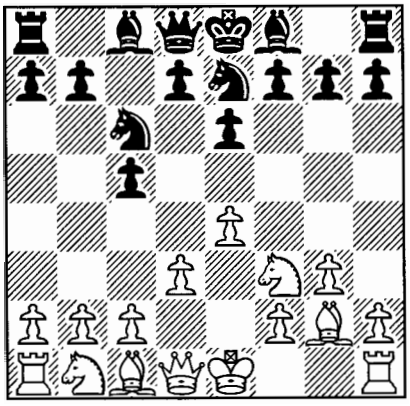
And Svidler threw in the towel as all his pieces are dropping. I think there's a reason why, even after being touted as the 'refutation' of this line, 5...f6 has not received much popularity. It seems that Black can probably reach equality in the 6 ♗e3 lines, so I advocate this fresh 6 ♗d2 approach with which White keeps up the pressure.

Game 71
L.Bruzon Bautista-M.Carlsen
Skanderborg 2005

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 ♘c6 4 g3 g6

The move order we are actually con-

cerned about is 4...♘ge7 as now 5 ♗g5 doesn't make sense and therefore I advocate simply transposing back into the main line with 5 ♗g2.



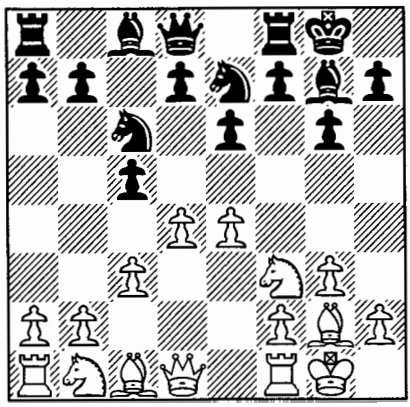
However, you should be aware of a couple of things: most people play 4...g6 and so you're likely to encounter 4...♘ge7 only if your opponent was expecting 5 ♗g5, which is still a rather rare option. Secondly, we no longer have to be concerned with any lines with ...♘f6.

If you wish to avoid the main line completely you could try 5 b3!? here, which I essayed once and as far as I can see hasn't been repeated. My idea was to deter ...g6 and thus make it difficult for Black to complete his development. The game continued 5...d5 6 ♕e2 dxe4 7 dxe4 e5 8 ♗b2 (it would also be interesting to change plan with 8 c3!? to take control over the important d4-square when the position resembles a very good King's Indian reversed) 8...♘g6 9 ♘bd2 ♗g4 10 h3 ♗xf3 11 ♕xf3 ♕f6 12 ♕xf6 gxf6 13 0-0-0 0-0-0 14 c3 and I went on to convert my positional advantages in G.Jones-N.Frost, Scarborough 2001.

5 ♗g2 ♗g7 6 0-0 ♘ge7 7 c3 0-0

7...e5 is committal, but prevents d3-d4 and will be looked at in the next game, while 7...d5 8 ♕e2 transposes to the hybrid variations seen towards the end of the last chapter.

8 d4

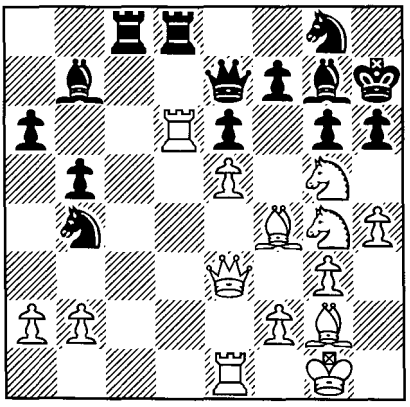


This is definitely the most dynamic try. White grabs the centre and attempts to exploit Black's choice to delay ...d7-d5. Black is forced to play actively or else he'll be clearly worse with much less space for his pieces. The game continuation becomes very complex and I can understand some players not feeling comfortable with the forthcoming sacrifice.

Therefore I'm offering 8 ♕e2 as an alternative plan hoping for 8...d5, transposing back into lines covered in the last chapter where we can hope to show that Black has castled too early:

a) A game of the highest-rated player in history continued 8...b6 9 ♖e1 d6 10 ♘bd2 ♗b7 11 ♘f1 b5 12 h4 h6 13 ♘1h2 (I hope this plan is familiar to you all after the last chapter) 13...♔h7 14 ♗d2 ♕d7 when Kasparov judged the time was right to open the centre with 15 d4! cxd4 16 cxd4 a6 (16...♘xd4 17 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 18 ♗xh6! is extremely promising with so many holes around Black's king) 17 ♖ad1 (White has a pleasant advantage with more space and continued kingside pressure; it's instructive to see how Kasparov finished off his oppo-

nent) 17...♖ac8 18 ♗f4 ♖fe8 19 ♕d2 ♕c7 20 ♘g4 ♘g8 21 e5 dxe5 22 dxe5 ♖ed8 23 ♕e3 ♕e7 24 ♖d6 ♘b4 25 ♘g5+ (25 ♗g5!? is also very tempting as Black is losing material: 25...hxg5 26 ♘xg5+ ♔h8 when perhaps the simplest is 27 ♕b6 ♗xg2 28 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 29 ♕xd8 and the rook and two pawns will be the more useful in the endgame)



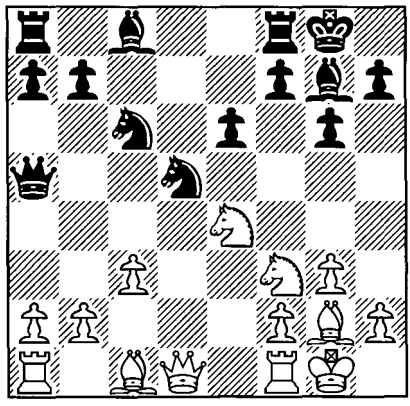
25...♔h8 26 ♗xb7 (26 ♕b6!, with the same idea as the previous note, should be winning: 26...♗xg2 27 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 28 ♕xd8) 26...♕xb7 27 ♕b6 ♕xb6 28 ♘xf7+ ♔h7 29 ♖xb6 1-0, G.Kasparov-A.Paco, Madrid (simul) 1997.

b) Perhaps 8...e5 is critical when we should switch back to playing on the queenside with 9 a3. I've written elsewhere that I'm suggesting the King's Indian Attack in our repertoire against 2...e6 as I believe that Black's best set-up involves having his pawn on e5 which of course loses a tempo now: 9...d6 (9...a5 10 a4! is an important sequence to remember; Black will regret having created such big holes on his queenside and for a thorough investigation of this type of position I suggest having a look at John Emms' *Starting Out: King's Indian Attack*) 10 b4 a6 (10...♗e6 11 ♘bd2 a6 12 ♖b1 cxb4 13 axb4 b5 14 ♗b2 was sensible play between two strong grandmasters who actually agreed a draw here in M.Roiz-I.Smirin, Fuegen 2006, although of course there's a lot of play left; I would prefer White slightly, since he can attempt to break in the centre with d3-d4 and start pushing Black backwards – more detailed coverage of this type of position will be seen in the following game) 11 ♘bd2 h6 12 ♖b1 ♕c7 13 ♗b2 ♗e6 14 ♖fc1 ♖ad8 was 5.Sergienko-G.Vescovi, Moscow 2010, when White should have waited a little longer before breaking with d3-d4. Indeed, 15 a4 looks like a promising start.

8...cxd4

The immediate 8...d5!? has also been tried, not giving White the c3-square for his knight.

However, we can exploit Black's delay with 9 exd5 which has been Zhang Zhong's speciality. The experienced grandmaster has tried this three times so evidently believes in White's position. Black can win the pawn back, but that takes a few tempi and we can hope to brew up an initiative in the meantime: 9...♘xd5 10 dxc5 ♕a5 11 ♘bd2 ♕xc5 12 ♘e4 ♕a5.



The position is not very typical of the King's Indian Attack, as we have an open centre, but nevertheless may appeal to some of you. Black is solidly placed, but still

has problems developing his light-squared bishop, while White can endeavour to exploit his queenside majority. Only after 13 ♗g5 (played in every game thus far, but 13 ♕e2 looks like an interesting alternative: for example, 13...b6 14 c4 ♗a6 15 ♗d2 ♕a4 16 b3 ♕a3 17 ♗c1 ♕e7 18 ♗b2 with a position that resembles a Scotch) 13...h6 14 ♗d2 ♕c7 15 c4 ♘de7 16 ♘c3 have Zhang Zhong's opponents varied:

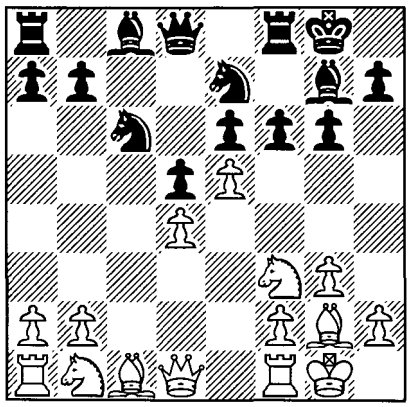
a) After losing his first game, Rublevsky tried 16...a6 as an improvement when I quite like 17 ♕c1 ♔h7 18 ♕c2 ♖d8 (18...♘b4 shouldn't be feared as 19 ♕b3 ♘d3 hits nothing and leaves the knight in danger of being trapped) 19 ♖ad1 ♗d7 (19...♘b4 20 ♕b3 ♘d3 21 ♗e3! is very unpleasant) 20 ♕e4 and White can return to attacking on the kingside.

b) 16...e5 was a try by one of the top women players, although 17 ♕c1 ♔h7 18 ♘d5 ♕d6 19 ♗c3 ♗g4 20 ♕e3 ♘xd5 21 cxd5 ♗xf3 22 ♕xf3 ♘d4 23 ♕d3 f5 24 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 25 ♕d2 kept White on top, Zhang Zhong-V.Cmilyte, Wijk aan Zee 2003.

c) 16...b6 17 ♕e2 ♘f5 18 ♘b5 ♕e7 19 ♘e5 ♘xe5 20 ♗xa8 ♗b7 21 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 22 f4 ♘c6 23 ♗c3 and White had picked up an extra exchange in Zhang Zhong-S.Rublevsky, Shanghai 2001.

It is also possible to continue after 8...d5 in the same spirit as our main game with 9 e5, but this is a slightly better version for Black as he can choose when to exchange on d4. After 9...♕b6 (the position looks like an Advance French where both sides have taken the unusual step of a kingside fianchetto) 10 ♘a3 cxd4 (Black takes now that we can't activate our knight to the most active square on c3) 11 cxd4 f6, as in V.Bologan-V.Ivanchuk, Moscow 1996, I think we should try to use the a3-knight with 12 exf6 ♗xf6 13 ♘c2 ♘f5 14 b3 ♘cxd4 15 ♘fxd4 ♗xd4 (15...♘xd4 16 ♗e3 would be rather embarrassing) 16 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 17 ♗a3 ♕xd1 18 ♖fxd1 when the bishop-pair and open lines leave White with decent compensation for the pawn.

9 cxd4 d5 10 e5 f6



This is the critical test. Black tries to undermine White's centre. Your opponent will feel much more comfortable in this type of position if he is a French player; Black's position no longer resembles a Sicilian at all. Here Black has also tried:

a) 10...♕b6 is another typical French motif, putting pressure on our d4-pawn, but we're in time to defend it: 11 ♘c3 ♘f5 12 ♘a4 ♕c7 and here I think we should expel the knight with 13 g4 ♘fe7, as in M.Gomes-C.Sanchez Santana, Kemer 2007, when the simple 14 ♖e1 looks strongest and after 14...f6 15 exf6 ♖xf6 16 ♗g5 ♖f4!? (Black's best bid for counterplay; if 16...♖f7 17 ♖c1 ♕d6 18 a3 and White's successfully put Black's squirming under wraps) 17 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 18 ♘c5 ♕xg4 19 ♕e2 the extra exchange should count for something.

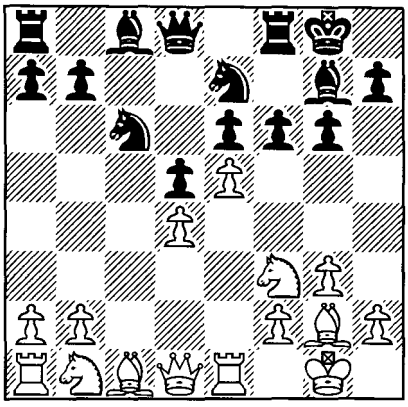
b) 10...♘f5 has also been tried reasonably frequently, leading to 11 ♘c3 f6 (11...♕b6 transposes to variation 'a') 12 g4 and then:

b1) 12...♘fe7 13 exf6 ♖xf6 14 ♗e3 ♖f8

(as played in Zhang Zhong-M.Kobalija, Ubeda 2001; instead the 14...♕f8 of V.Iordachescu-R.Djurhuus, Yerevan Olympiad 1996, prepares an exchange sacrifice and the most sensible response appears to be 15 h3, so that 15...♖f4?! 16 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 17 ♘e2 is nothing to worry about) 15 ♖e1 ♗d7 16 ♕d2 ♘c8 17 ♗f4 ♘b6 18 b3 leaves White in control of the dark squares.

b2) 12...fxe5!? was an interesting piece sacrifice tried in A.Diamant-F.Larcheveque, Calvi 2010, but White should retain the advantage with correct play: 13 gxf5 e4 14 ♘e5! ♖xf5 (the alternative 14...♘xe5 15 dxe5 ♖xf5 – 15...gxf5 16 ♗f4 blocks Black's pawn diamond – 16 ♗xe4 leaves Black with insufficient compensation for the piece) 15 f4! and White keeps well on top of the position.

11 ♖e1



11...fxe5

Black must do something quickly. If White gets enough time to develop all his pieces then he will be better with the greater space and the safer king. Thus Black has to target White's centre immediately.

11...♘f5 has been the alternative treatment, hitting the other pawn, and after 12 ♘c3 Black has tried:

a) 12...fxe5 13 dxe5 h6 14 h4! transposes to note 'a' to Black's 12th move in our main game.

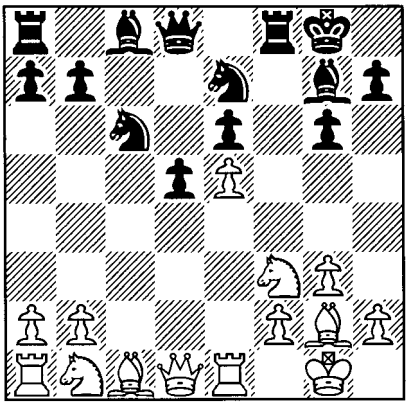
b) 12...♗d7 13 g4 ♘fe7 14 exf6 ♖xf6 was I.Glek-K.Landa, German League 2000, and now I quite like playing quietly with 15 ♗e3 ♕f8 16 h3, just consolidating on the kingside so that Black has no annoying sacrifices before we start pressing on the queenside. White should be better here so long as we don't allow the break ...e6-e5, as Black's position is rather constricted.

c) 12...♔h8 (Black plays his king to safety before opening up the position) 13 g4! (forcing a concession out of Black) 13...♘h4!? (an interesting piece sacrifice; evidently 13...♘fe7 didn't appeal as 14 exf6 ♖xf6 15 ♗g5 would leave White with the upper hand, since he has successfully developed all his pieces while Black has been left with a backward e-pawn and a bad bishop on c8 – note too that the pawn on g4 is useful to control f5 and it seems that Black has no way to exploit it) 14 ♘xh4 fxe5 and then:

c1) 15 ♘xg6+!? (Vescovi sacrifices the piece back to open up Black's king) 15...hxg6 16 dxe5 ♘xe5 was G.Vescovi-A.Volokitin, Bermuda 2005, when, as Vescovi himself pointed out, he should have tried 17 ♖e3 ♔g8 18 ♖g3 followed by ♗e3-d4 with an extremely complicated position. Black has the centre but also a rather vulnerable king and so White has reasonable chances.

c2) White could also keep the extra piece with 15 g5 when 15...exd4 (15...♘xd4 16 ♘e2 looks quite good for White) 16 ♘e2 e5 leaves Black with a big centre, but White does have that extra piece and can try playing around the pawn mass: for example, 17 ♕b3 e4 18 ♘f4 ♘e7 19 ♗d2 when the extra material shouldn't be underestimated.

12 dxe5



12...♖f5

This looks critical to me. Carlsen, who was barely a teenager at this point, puts pressure on the only weak point in our position. Others:

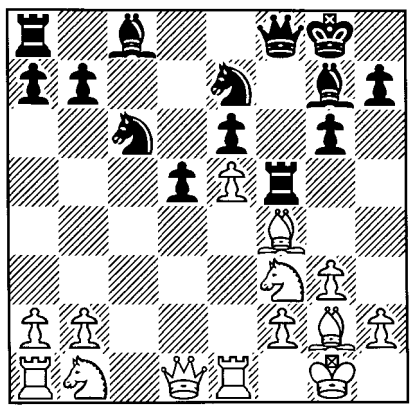
a) 12...h6 13 h4 ♘f5 14 ♘c3 has been reached in quite a few high-level clashes where White has scored well: 14...♗d7 15 ♗f4 ♗e8 (15...♖c8 has also been played immediately, but shouldn't make much difference) 16 ♕d2 ♖c8 (16...♕b6 17 ♖ad1 ♖d8 18 ♘a4 ♕b5 19 b3 ♔h7 20 ♗f1 ♕b4 21 ♕xb4 ♘xb4 22 ♘c5 ♗f7 23 a3 b6 24 axb4 bxc5 25 bxc5 was one of the first games in this line and a textbook example of what White is aiming for, L.Ljubojevic-J.Timman, Hilversum 1973) 17 ♖ac1 ♖c7 was A.Morozevich-N.McDonald, British League 2002, when 18 ♘b5 would have put Black under a lot of pressure: for example, 18...♖cf7 19 ♗h3! ♔h7 20 ♗xf5! ♖xf5 (20...gxf5 21 ♘fd4 ♘xd4 22 ♘xd4 would leave Black in a complete bind) 21 ♘bd4 and White picks up material. The exchange sacrifice 21...♖xf4 is dealt with most accurately by 22 ♘xe6 ♖xf3 23 ♘xd8 ♘xd8 24 ♖c7, with a decisive advantage.

b) Ljubojevic really pioneered this set-up for White. Another of his early games in the line continued 12...♗d7 13 ♘c3 ♖c8 14 ♗f4 ♘f5 15 ♕d2 ♘a5 16 b3 b5?! (16...h6 was necessary, but I think White has very good chances after 17 h4) 17 ♗g5! ♕b6 (17...♘e7 18 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 19 ♘xd5 exd5 20 ♕xa5 is hardly any better) 18 g4! (suddenly the knight has nowhere to go) 18...♘h6 19 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 20 ♕xh6 ♖xf3 (20...♖xc3 21 ♘g5! ♖xf2 22 ♔h1! is hopeless too) 21 ♗xf3 ♖xc3 22 ♕f4 ♘c6 23 ♗xd5 ♘d4 24 ♖ad1 1-0, L.Ljubojevic-S.Tatai, Manila 1973.

13 ♗f4

13 ♗h3 would allow Black the strong 13...♘xe5! 14 ♗xf5 ♘xf3+ 15 ♕xf3 ♘xf5 when he has enough control over the position to claim good compensation for the exchange.

13...♕f8



14 ♕d2

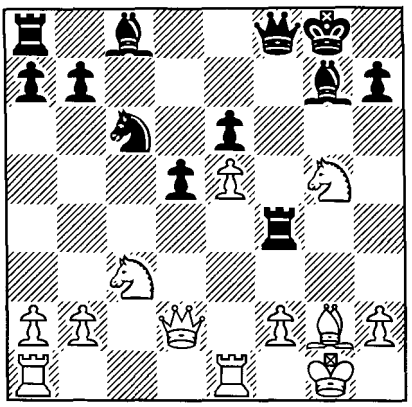
The f4-bishop needs defending. 14 ♘c3?! would allow another strong sacrifice in the shape of 14...♖xf4! 15 gxf4 ♕xf4 when e5 is likely to drop too, which would allow all of Black's pieces out of the box.

14...g5! 15 ♘xg5 ♘g6 16 ♘c3 ♘xf4

16...♘cxe5?! is Black's other logical capture here, but as Postny points out, White achieves a good game with 17 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 (17...♖xe5 18 f4! ♖xe1+ 19 ♖xe1 would leave White in complete control; Black still cannot liberate his position with the ...e6-e5

thrust) 18 f4 ♘c4, but here I prefer 19 ♕c2 ♘xb2 (otherwise Black has nothing to show for his positional problems) 20 ♔h1! (20 ♕xb2 ♕c5+ was Black's idea) 20...d4 (20...♕c5 21 ♘xe6 is terrible for Black) 21 ♕xb2 dxc3 22 ♕b3 and Black has his eternal problems with his queenside rook and bishop, while the c3-pawn doesn't cause any problems for White. It's important to realize here that we don't want to recapture the pawn on e6, at least not immediately, as that would allow Black to liberate his position.

17 gxf4 ♖xf4



White's position may look hopeless, but don't despair – Bruzon knows what he's doing. Material is level, but we cannot defend the e5-pawn which is holding our position together. Therefore our next is forced.

18 ♘xd5!

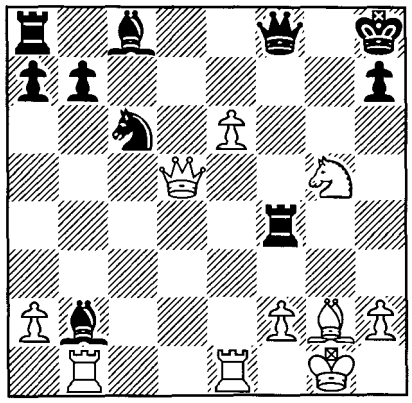
A subtle sacrifice.

18...exd5 19 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 20 e6!

So White has no immediate killing attack, but is content to simply play the position a piece down. The pawn on e6 is extremely useful in blunting the c8-bishop and thus stops the a8-rook from developing. Indeed, at this juncture we can claim to be a rook up in the active-piece count. The pawn is also contributing to attacking the black king. The computer's not entirely convinced, but only assesses it as slight edge to Black. That's pretty good considering we're a piece down! Certainly in practical chess Black has problems here. He must constantly be on the look out for ideas of ♘f7+, e6-e7 or White targeting h7 with ♕d3 or ♖e3-h3.

20...♕e7

The b2-pawn is hardly relevant to the position and so White doesn't need to rush after 20...♗xb2. I like the look of 21 ♖ab1! (21 ♘f7+ is given by Postny, but this allows Black to swap off into a roughly level endgame: 21...♖xf7 22 exf7 ♗xa1 23 ♖e8 ♗g4 24 ♕e4 ♗h5 25 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 26 ♕b1 ♗g7 27 ♕xb7 ♘e5 28 ♕xa7 ♖xf7 with a rather unclear situation as the a-pawn will prove rather fast; I prefer keeping Black under pressure for longer).



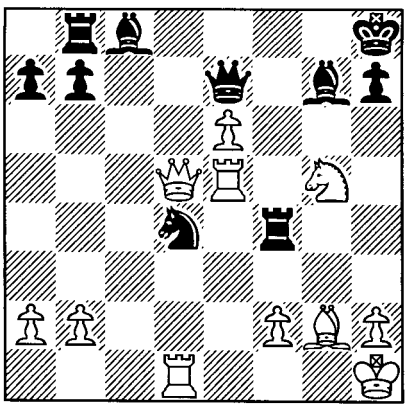
This is a difficult position to analyse seeing as it has only been reached once, but I think White has very good practical chances. A few of my lines of analysis run: 21...♗f6 (21...♗d4 22 ♘f7+ would be winning now as Black cannot grab the rook in the corner) 22 ♘f7+ ♔g8 (22...♔g7 23 ♕h5 ♖h4 24 ♕f3 looks rather dangerous for Black) 23 ♖b3 ♗h4 24 ♖g3+ ♗xg3 25 hxg3

♖f6 (25...♖xf7 26 exf7+ ♕xf7 27 ♕c5! is winning for White as 27...♗e6? allows 28 ♖xe6! and thus Black still doesn't have time to develop his queenside pieces) 26 e7 ♘xe7 27 ♘h6+ ♔g7 (or 27...♔h8 28 ♖xe7!) 28 ♖xe7+ ♔xh6 (28...♕xe7 29 ♕g5+ picks up the queen) 29 ♕e4 and despite the rook deficit, I would pick White every time with such a huge attack.

21 ♖ad1 ♘d4 22 ♔h1!

Bruzon shows remarkable patience with the position. He has two pawns for the piece and it's tough to see how Black should improve his position, let alone develop his final two pieces.

22...♖b8 23 ♖e5!



23...♘c6

Postny describes this move as the 'decisive mistake'.

23...♗d7! seems like Black's only way to stay in the game. Postny's analysis runs 24 ♖xd4 ♗c6 25 ♖xf4 ♗xd5 26 ♘f7+ ♔g8 27 ♗xd5 ♗xe5 28 ♘xe5 and despite the reduced material, Black must still be careful. White has two pieces and two pawns for the queen, while the e6-pawn still weighs the position in his favour, as Black must be careful not to allow any mates or the pawn to promote. After 28...h5 (♖f4-♖g4+ was a threat) 29 ♖f3 (so White renews the threat) 29...♕b4 White can try:

a) 30 ♘d7 ♕b5 31 e7+ ♔g7 32 ♖g3+ ♔h8 33 ♘xb8 ♕xd5+ 34 ♔g1 ♕d1+ 35 ♔g2 ♕d5+ with perpetual (Postny).

b) 30 ♖g3+ also looks interesting, but it seems that Black can hold on the draw: for example, 30...♔h7 (30...♔f8 31 ♘d7+) 31 ♘f7 ♖c8 32 a3 ♖c1+ 33 ♔g2 ♕e1 34 ♘g5+ ♔h6 35 ♘f7+ and again it's perpetual.

c) 30 e7+ ♔g7 31 ♖f7+ (31 ♖g3+ ♔f6 32 ♘d7+ ♔xe7 33 ♘xb8 ♕d6 34 ♖e3+ ♔d8 35 ♗xb7 ♕xb8 is also equal and will likely result in perpetual) 31...♔h6 32 ♖f6+ ♔g7 33 ♖f7+ ♔h6 is also given by Postny as a draw. Therefore it appears that with perfect play Black can wriggle out and hold, but I wouldn't be surprised if there were an improvement for White here, while Black must memorize many difficult lines or he'll get destroyed. Definitely a good practical try for White!

24 ♖f5

Black's problem is that his king is now just too exposed.

24...♗xe6

Carlsen finally gets tired of having to play around the c8-bishop and realizes that he must sacrifice to get his queen's rook into the game, but it's too late.

Instead 24...♖g4 25 ♘f7+! ♔g8 26 ♘d8 ♘b4 27 ♕b3, winning for White, is given by Postny. Here 28 ♖d7 is one of the many threats, for example: 27...a5 28 ♖d7 ♗xd7 29 exd7+ ♔h8 30 ♘f7+ ♔g8 31 d8♕+ ♖xd8 32 ♘xd8+ ♔h8 33 ♘f7+ ♔g8 34 ♘h6+ ♔h8 35 ♕g8 mate.

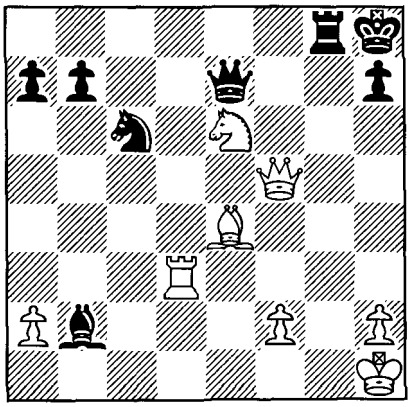
24...♖xf5 doesn't save Black either as 25 ♕xf5 ♗f6 26 ♗xc6 ♗xe6 (26...bxc6 27 ♖d8+ ♕xd8 28 ♕xh7 mate is pointed out by Postny) 27 ♘xe6 bxc6 28 b3 leaves White a pawn up and his attack hasn't disappeared.

25 ♘xe6 ♖xf5 26 ♕xf5 ♗xb2 27 ♗e4

All of White's pieces line up towards

Black's king. Black doesn't even have any material to show for it anymore.

27...♖g8 28 ♖d3!



No prizes for guessing where that rook's going.

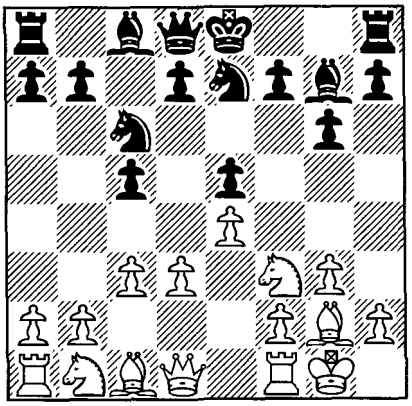
28...♘e5 29 ♖b3

29 ♖h3! immediately is even simpler.

29...♕h4 30 ♖h3 1-0

Game 72
L.Bruzon Bautista-U.Andersson
Havana 2003

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 ♘c6 4 g3 g6 5 ♗g2 ♗g7 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 0-0 e5



If Black doesn't want to allow White to expand in the centre then this is his normal try. However, Black has lost a tempo and thus White has good chances for an advantage.

The fact that 1 ♘f3 c5 2 g3 ♘c6 3 ♗g2 g6 4 0-0 ♗g7 5 c3 e5 6 e4 ♘ge7 7 d3 0-0 8 a3 is actually a main-line position should be very encouraging to us, as we manage to get the position a tempo up as Black has not yet castled. The position is closed and so tempi don't matter so much, but still an extra tempo over a mainline position must be deemed an opening success!

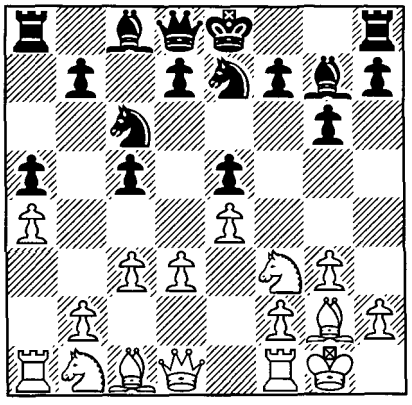
8 a3

White would like to play 8 ♗e3 d6 9 d4, but unfortunately 9...exd4 10 cxd4 ♗g4 is known to be quite good for Black.

8...0-0

Alternatively:

a) 8...a5?! has been played surprisingly often. Black prevents 9 b4, but the holes in his position are far more important defects, as revealed by 9 a4!.



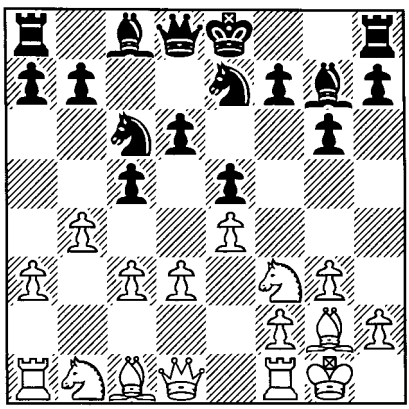
Now Black has chronic weaknesses on b5 and c4 and after 9...0-0 10 ♘a3 d6 11 ♖e1 h6 12 ♘d2 ♗e6 13 ♘b5 the knights manoeuvre into the holes. Now:

a1) 13...d5 14 exd5 ♘xd5 15 ♘c4 and Black has more problems than it appears at

first sight. The white knights control a lot of squares and cannot be shifted. Indeed, b6 is a problem, while c5 and e5 are also under pressure. Here 15...♖a6 16 ♕e2 ♖e8 was seen in V.Bologan-N.Firman, Moscow 2002, when 17 f4! would actually pick up material as 17...exf4 18 ♗xd5! ♕xd5 19 ♘c7 forks everything.

a2) 13...f5 was evidently Black's initial idea, but White can deal with this very effectively with 14 ♘c4! ♘c8 (or 14...♗xc4 15 dxc4 and Black won't be able to hold on to d6 in the long run) 15 exf5 gxf5 16 f4! e4 17 ♘e3 d5 18 dxe4 dxe4 (18...fxe4 is positionally desirable, but 19 f5! forces Black to give up material as 19...♗f7 20 ♘g4 proves to be a decisive attack) 19 ♕xd8 ♘xd8 20 ♘c7 ♖b8 21 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 22 ♖d1 and Black's f5-pawn is going to be a huge headache for him for the rest of the game.

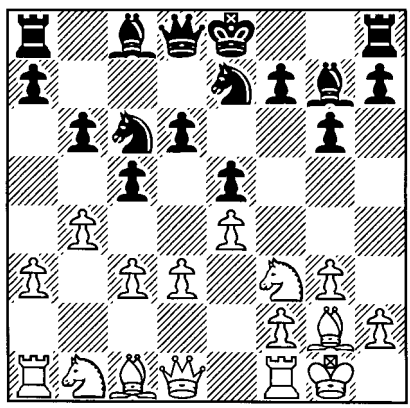
b) 8...d6 9 b4 wastes no time striking out on the queenside:



b1) 9...h6 10 ♘bd2 ♗e6 11 ♗b2 0-0 when I think it might be time to play 12 b5 ♘a5 (12...♘b8 13 ♘c4 also looks quite pleasant for White; Black does not want to play 13...♗xc4 14 dxc4 as the d6-pawn normally proves a bigger weakness than the c4-pawn, since it's hard for Black to target c4 while it's easy to triple up on the d-file) 13 c4 b6, as White did in J.Ramiro Ovejero-V.Dimitrov, Cambados 2008, when I like 14 ♗c3 which is rather similar to Wei Chenpeng-Ni Hua below.

b2) If Black is worried about our b4-b5 advance then he can play 9...a6, although I think here too White has the easier game: for example, 10 ♗e3 b6 11 ♘bd2 0-0 12 ♖b1 h6 13 bxc5 bxc5 14 ♘c4 ♗e6 15 ♘fd2 saw White making progress on the queenside in G.Hernandez-E.Moreno Tejera, Vila Real 2001.

b3) 9...b6 with a further divide:



b31) 10 ♘bd2 0-0 11 ♘c4 a6 12 bxc5 bxc5 13 ♖b1 ♘a5 14 ♘xa5 ♕xa5 15 ♘d2 ♗e6 (if 15...♕xc3?? 16 ♘c4 and the queen won't escape) 16 ♘c4! ♕c7 (16...♗xc4 17 dxc4 would leave Black with big problems on the d-file) 17 ♗g5 f6 18 ♗d2 ♖fb8 19 ♕a4 ♗f8 was J.Timman-L.Kavalek, Tilburg 1977, and here expanding on both sides of the board with 20 f4! would have given White a pleasant edge.

b32) Closing the queenside is also possible: 10 b5 ♘a5 11 c4 0-0 12 a4 h6 13 ♗b2 ♗e6 14 ♘bd2 ♕c7 was Wei Chenpeng-Ni Hua, Jinan 2005, when 15 ♗c3 would have kept White with a small advantage, as we don't have to worry about 15...f5 (15...♘b7 16 ♘e1 is more comfortable for White with

his extra space), since 16 exf5 gxf5 17 ♘h4 ♖ae8 18 f4! is generally a good way to deal with Black's attempted ...f7-f5 break.

c) 8...d5 takes the centre, but allows White another very good version of a King's Indian. By my reckoning, White is two tempi up on a normal KID (one because he's White and one because Black has played ...e6-e5). This should mean that White is doing rather well and, indeed, after 9 b4 dxe4 10 dxe4 ♕xd1 11 ♖xd1 cxb4 12 axb4 a6 13 b5 ♘b8 14 ♘bd2 ♘d7 15 ♘c4 0-0 16 ♗a3 Black was already lost in V.Sanduleac-A.Coset, Kishinev 2007.

9 b4 cxb4

This doesn't work out at all well for Black who cedes control of the centre and has structural problems.

9...d6 has been the most common way to deal with the threat to the c5-pawn. It's important not to rush this position with White. We would like to expand with d3-d4, but first we should get everything ready. We should also watch out for Black's most dynamic plan of ...f7-f5:

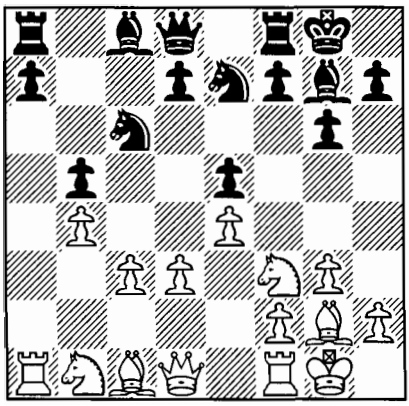
a) 10 ♗b2 a6 11 ♘bd2 h6 12 ♘c4 ♗e6 13 ♘e3 ♖b8 14 bxc5 dxc5 15 a4 f5 was G.Vescovi-A.Motylev, Bermuda 2003, when White should take: 16 exf5 gxf5 17 ♕e2 ♕d7 18 ♖fd1 and Black has to be very careful that we can't suddenly open up the position with d3-d4 as his king is so exposed. Therefore again I'd prefer to have the white pieces.

b) 10 ♗e3 b6 (J.Timman-C.Lutz, Saint Vincent 2000) when I think 11 ♕c2 is a good chance for an advantage: for instance, 11...♗g4 12 ♘bd2 ♖c8 13 ♕b2 with chances in the centre and on the queenside.

c) 10 b5!? is also interesting.

10 axb4 b5

So this was Andersson's idea. In keeping with certain KID lines, Black blocks up the queenside and hopes to eventually be able to play ...a7-a5. However, here Black will never manage that liberating thrust and thus a5 and c5 will prove to be big weaknesses in his position.



11 ♘a3

Forcing the black rook off the a-file, thereby diminishing the value of any future a7-a5 break. This position was also reached recently in which White opted for the direct 11 d4!? exd4 12 ♘xd4:

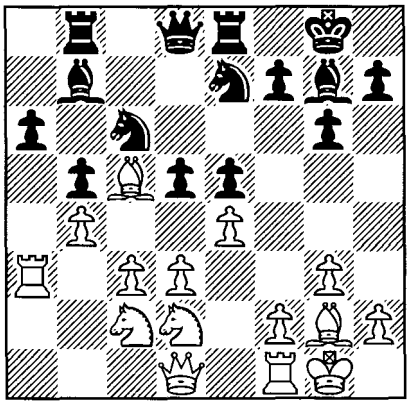
a) 12...♘xd4 13 cxd4 ♘c6 14 e5 fails to win a pawn for Black and he'll regret having allowed White such a large centre.

b) 12...a5 was A.Belezky-P.Jaracz, German League 2010. Here I like the look of 13 ♗g5 threatening 14 ♘xc6 and thus obliging Black to try 13...♘xd4 14 cxd4 h6 (14...a4 15 ♘c3 looks pretty hideous) 15 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 16 e5 ♖b8 (16...♖a6 17 ♘c3 is quite a powerful initiative as 17...♕xb4? loses material to 18 ♘d5 ♕b2 19 ♕d3 when the queen's trapped) 17 bxa5 and the extra a-pawn looks quite useful.

11...♖b8 12 ♗e3 d5

Giving away the c5-square forever, but otherwise Black had no counterplay and would have to sit and wait until White felt completely ready to break with d3-d4 or c3-c4.

13 ♗c5 ♖e8 14 ♘c2 a6 15 ♘d2 ♗b7 16 ♖a3



White's b4-c3-d3-e4 pawn formation is very strong. It is flexible and allows us to prepare either c3-c4 or d3-d4 pawn breaks, while the b4-pawn holds up two outposts on c5 and a5. Black has no targets to hit to generate any counterplay and thus Andersson, one of the finest defenders in the history of the game, has to wait while Bruzon slowly increases his advantage to decisive proportions.

16...♖c8 17 ♘b3

It was also possible to release the tension with 17 exd5 ♘xd5 18 ♘e4 ♖e6 19 ♘e3 ♘xe3 20 ♗xe3 with a clear advantage, but Bruzon prefers to wait.

17...♘b8 18 ♘e3

This doesn't spoil any of the advantage, but there was a tactic available. White had the chance to win material here with 18 ♘a5! ♗a8 19 exd5 when Black would have had to give up the exchange as after 19...♗xd5 (19...♘xd5 20 c4 ♘c7 21 ♗xa8 ♘xa8 22 ♘b7 ♕d7 23 ♘d6 picks up the exchange) 20 ♘b7 ♗xb7 21 ♗xb7 the c8-rook is trapped.

18...d4

Black felt obliged to push the pawn, but now White can concentrate on picking up the resulting isolated pawn.

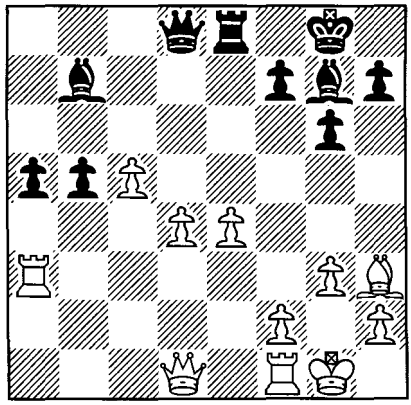
19 cxd4 exd4 20 ♘c2 ♘ec6 21 ♗h3! ♘d7 22 ♘cxd4

22 ♗d6 was more accurate. The d4-pawn is going to drop anyway and the game continuation allows Black a little counterplay.

22...♘xc5 23 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 24 ♘xc5 ♖xc5?!

24...♕e7 should have been tried when Black has some chances due to his dark-square control. 25 d4? doesn't work as now 25...♖xc5! 26 dxc5 ♕xe4 would be very strong. Similarly 25 ♗d7? can't be advised as 25...♖xc5 26 ♗xe8 ♖c8 picks up two pieces for the rook, and so 25 ♕b1! looks best.

25 bxc5 a5 26 d4!



The most accurate way to convert the material advantage.

26...b4

Black's alternatives are no better:

a) 26...♗xe4 27 d5! ♖e5 28 d6 ♖xc5 29 ♖e3 and the remaining pawn is too strong.

b) 26...♖xe4 27 ♕c2 ♖xd4 28 c6! ♖c4 29 ♕xc4 bxc4 30 cxb7 ♗e5 31 ♖b1 is likewise hopeless for Black.

27 ♖e3 ♕c7

27...♕xd4 was the last chance, but after 28 ♕a4 ♖e7 29 c6 the c-pawn is just too strong.

28 ♗g2 ♖a8 29 ♕d2 ♖d8 30 e5 ♗xg2 31

♔xg2 ♗xe5 32 ♖d3 ♕c6+ 33 f3 ♗f6 34 ♖c1 ♕d5 35 ♕c2 ♖b8 36 c6 ♖c8 37 ♕c5 ♕xc5 38 ♖xc5 ♗e7 39 ♖xa5 ♖xc6 40 d5 ♖b6 41 ♖b3 ♔g7 42 f4 ♖b7 43 ♔f3 ♖c7 44 ♖a6 ♖c1 45 ♖d3 ♗f6 46 ♖c6 1-0

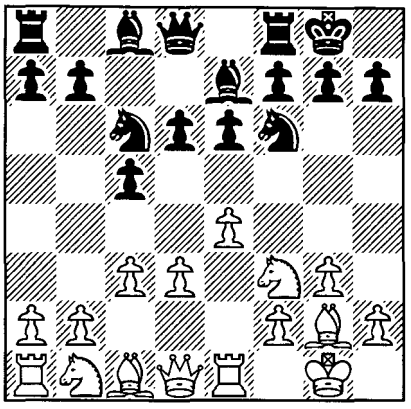
Game 73
G.Jones-K.Mah
Street 2003

1 e4 e6 2 d3 c5 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 g3 d6

This is hardly a critical set-up. White should be able to advance in the centre and obtain a small advantage.

Instead 4...♘f6 5 ♗g2 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 is a rather devious move order. Black delays moving his d-pawn and forces us to commit. I have decided that 7 ♖e1 is sensible when 7...d5 (7...d6 8 c3 would transpose back into our main game here) 8 e5 ♘d7 9 ♕e2 is likely to transpose to positions we looked at in the previous chapter.

5 ♗g2 ♘f6 6 0-0 ♗e7 7 ♖e1 0-0 8 c3



8...♗d7

This is the most common, although Black has a few alternatives:

a) 8...♕c7 9 d4 d5!? and then:

a1) 10 e5 ♘e4 11 ♘bd2 f5 12 exf6 ♘xf6 (S.Khader-I.Shehab, Dubai 2004) 13 ♘g5 cxd4 14 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 15 ♖xe6 dxc3 16 bxc3 with a slight edge thanks to the bishop-pair.

a2) 10 exd5!? also looks interesting as 10...♘xd5 (10...exd5 should be played, although perhaps White has a little something after 11 ♗f4 ♕b6 12 ♕b3) 11 c4 ♘f6 12 d5 exd5 13 cxd5 ♖d8 14 ♘c3 ♗g4 15 ♗f4 ♕b6 16 ♕b3 ♘d4 17 ♘xd4 cxd4 18 ♖xe7 dxc3 already left Black a pawn down in V.Jansa-J.Votava, Turnov 1996.

b) 8...e5 has been played here too, although the bishop looks better placed on g7 to me. White should have a small advantage here thanks to the hole on d5: 9 ♘a3 ♖e8 10 ♘c2 ♗f8 11 ♗g5! (as the position is blocked up, knights are more important than bishops) 11...h6 12 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 13 ♘e3 ♗e6 14 ♖f1 ♕d8 15 ♘d2 ♘e7 16 f4 and White had the makings of a pleasant initiative on the kingside, Yu Shaoteng-Wang Rui, Gyula 2000.

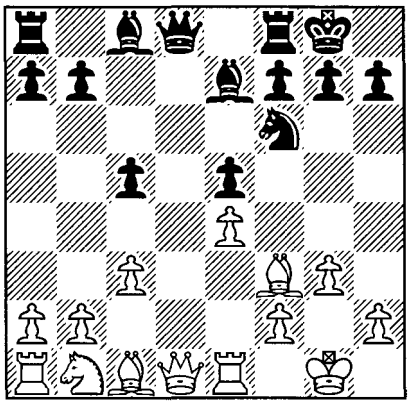
c) 8...♖b8 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 d5 11 e5 ♘e4 doesn't change much and indeed I would be attracted by 12 ♘c3 even more here as Black will struggle to put pressure on the c3-pawn.

d) We'd be very happy to see 8...d5 9 e5 ♘d7 when we have gained some time on positions from the previous chapter.

e) 8...b6 9 d4 d5 appeared in A.Skripchenko-V.Milov, Port Erin 2004, when I like 10 ♘e5! ♗b7 (10...♘xe5 11 dxe5 ♘xe4 12 f3 embarrasses the knight) 11 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 12 e5 with good attacking chances.

e) 8...♘e5!? is an uncompromising possibility that a few strong players have tried: 9 d4 ♘xf3+ 10 ♗xf3 e5 (or 10...♘d7 11 ♘a3 a6 12 ♘c4 ♕c7 13 d5 ♘e5, as in M.Dzhumaev-V.Zvjaginsev, Linares 2000, when 14 ♘xe5 dxe5 15 c4 exd5 16 cxd5 isn't totally clear, but White has chances to

play on the queenside or for an f2-f4 break) 11 dxe5 dxe5 looks like an Exchange King's Indian.



I really like White in these set-ups as we have use of the d5 outpost while Black doesn't have the d4-square in return. A.Minasian-L.Nisipeanu, Moscow 2005, continued 12 ♕e2 ♗e6 and here perhaps White could switch plans with 13 ♖d1 ♕c7 14 c4!?, as Black's knight is so far from d4: 14...♖ad8 15 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 16 ♘c3, with a pleasant edge.

9 d4

The most direct choice, although White can also choose to play as in the previous game. Indeed, 9 a3 was the choice in V.Bologan-C.Sandipan, Gibraltar 2008.

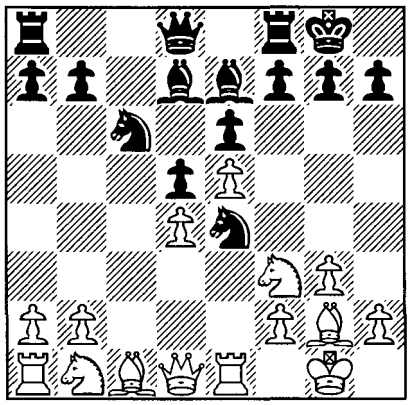
9...cxd4

9...d5 is possible too when I think we should exchange on d5: 10 exd5 exd5 (10...♘xd5 11 c4 looks promising for White and is similar to the variation 'a2' above) 11 ♗e3 ♕b6 12 ♕b3 c4 13 ♕c2 when we have ideas of undermining Black's pawns with b2-b3, as well as utilizing the e5-square and putting pressure on d5.

10 cxd4 d5 11 e5

If you enjoy playing with the isolated pawn then 11 exd5 is an alternative plan which seems to promise White a small edge: 11...♘xd5 12 ♘c3 ♖c8 13 ♗d2 ♗f6 14 ♘e5! ♘xc3 15 ♗xc3 ♗e8 16 ♕g4 ♕c7 17 ♖ad1 and White was very active, S.Polgar-V.Korchnoi Curacao 2002.

11...♘e4



So far the moves have been quite logical by both sides, but here we have a choice. Black is solidly placed but I prefer White with his greater space. Remember our plan of starting an initiative on the kingside with h4-h5.

12 ♘c3!?

I choose the more dynamic option, although this leaves Black a target to attack on c3.

12 ♘bd2 is the safer option and we could do worse than follow a game of Amin, an Egyptian Grandmaster who seems to play the King's Indian Attack exclusively: 12...♘xd2 13 ♗xd2 ♖c8 (13...♕b6 was once played against the much-missed English Grandmaster, Tony Miles: 14 ♗c3 ♖ac8 15 ♕d2 ♗b4 16 ♖ac1 ♗xc3 17 ♖xc3 ♘a5 18 ♖ec1 ♖xc3 19 ♖xc3 ♖c8 20 b3 ♖xc3 21 ♕xc3 ♘c6 saw White retain a small pull with his space advantage and as the bishop on d7 doesn't do much in this position, A.Miles-K.Helmers, Reykjavik 1980) 14 a3 (Amin prefers not to let his opponent exchange bishops) 14...♕b6 15 ♗c3 ♘a5 16 ♘d2 ♖fd8 17

h4 ♘c4 18 ♖b1 ♕c7 19 ♖c1 ♕b6 20 ♕c2 ♖c7 21 ♘xc4 dxc4 22 ♗e4 h6 23 ♕d2 ♕b5 24 ♗b1 ♗c6 25 ♕c2 g6 26 ♔h2 ♕d5 27 f4 h5 28 ♖g1 ♔f8 29 ♖ce1 ♔e8 30 ♕f2 ♕b5 31 g4 hxg4 32 ♖xg4 ♔d7 33 f5! gxf5 34 ♗xf5 ♔c8 35 ♗c2 and White was ultimately successful in B.Amin-G.Margvelashvili, Yerevan 2007.

12...♘xc3 13 bxc3 ♘a5

Or 13...b5 14 h4 b4 15 cxb4 ♗xb4, as in E.Mortensen-B.Ahlander, Swedish League 2002, when I'd prefer to keep the dark-squared bishops on the board with 16 ♖e2.

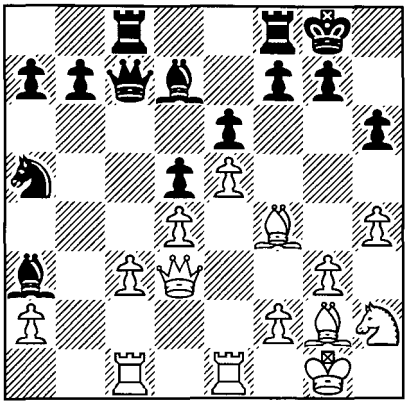
14 h4!

It doesn't make sense to delay our kingside offensive.

14...♖c8 15 ♕d3 h6

15...♕c7 16 ♗g5 ♗xg5 17 ♘xg5 would be rather awkward to deal with.

16 ♗f4 ♕c7 17 ♖ac1 ♗a3 18 ♘h2!



This is the critical point of the line. I decided that the dark-squared bishop is Black's strongest defensive piece and so was happy to sacrifice one of my rooks, which at the moment wasn't doing anything anyway, in order to continue my attack and delay his counterplay on the queenside. I'm going to stick my neck out and say that the exchange sacrifice is sound and that White is doing very well.

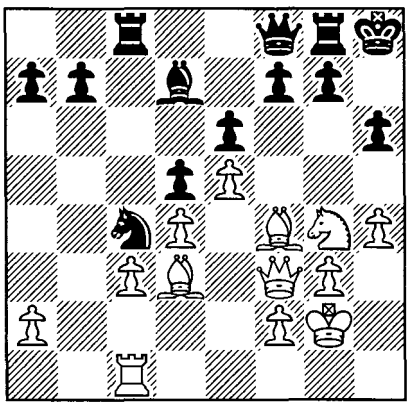
18...♕c4

Initially after 18...♗xc1 (the proof of the pudding must be in the eating!) 19 ♖xc1 the computer isn't impressed, but I persevered. Interestingly my computer cannot come up with a plan for Black. It can defend against the mate threat, no mean task by the way, and I doubt many of your opponents will be up to the task, but the computer fails to improve its position if I do nothing. I have given some lines below to demonstrate: 19...♔h8 20 ♕f3 (I don't think the move order matters too much, but this at least has the immediate threat of 21 ♗xh6; our plan is to play ♗g2-f1-d3, ♘h2-g4, ♔g1-g2 and then ♗f4-g5 and ♕f3-f4, which is a very long-term plan but I can't see what Black can do) 21 ♘g4 (21 ♗f1!? would prevent 21...♗b5, but as we will see that's not a real problem). Now:

a) 21...♘c4 22 ♘f6! gxf6 23 ♕h5 fxe5 24 ♗xh6 is extremely dangerous. White won't even be behind on material.

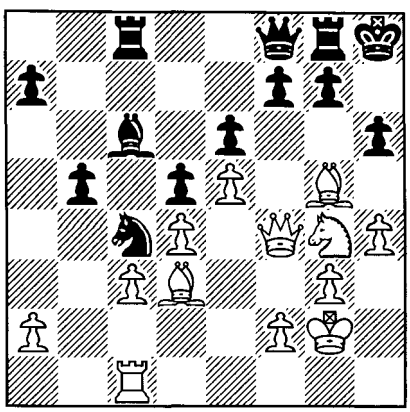
b) 21...♗b5 22 ♗xh6 f5 23 exf6 gxh6 24 f7! is very strong.

c) 21..♖g8 22 ♗f1 ♘c4 23 ♗d3 (23 ♗xh6!? gxh6 24 ♘xh6 ♕e7 25 ♗d3 is also great compensation) 23...♕f8 (23...♗b5 24 ♖b1 a6 25 a4 ♗c6 26 ♘f6 is very promising) 24 ♔g2.



I think this is the critical position. Black has successfully parried any immediate mates, but I don't see how he gets any further. Meanwhile we have our plan of ♗g5 and ♕f4 followed by sacrificing on h6. Currently my computer is suggesting ...b6 and ...♗b5-e8-a4-c6 as its next five moves!

After 24...♗c6 (24...♗b5 might be slightly annoying, but still 25 ♖b1 ♗a6 26 ♗c1 ♘a3 ♖b3 ♗xd3 28 ♕xd3 ♘c4 29 ♖xb7 leaves White doing well, and perhaps we could even have thrown in 24 ♖b1) 25 ♗g5! (the bishop is of course taboo, as there is a swift mate down the h-file) 25...b5 (25...♘b2 is not a good idea as after 26 ♗b1 the knight is now stuck on b2 to prevent ♕d3, while 25...♗b5 26 ♖b1 would transpose to the previous note) 26 ♕f4! Black might try:



c1) 26...h5 27 ♘h2 ♗e8 28 ♕f3 g6 29 g4 and Black won't be able to parry the attack.

c2) 26...♘b6 27 ♘xh6! gxh6 28 ♗f6+ ♖g7 29 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 30 ♕f4 ♖h7 (30...♘d7 31 h5! ♘xf6 32 exf6 ♖h7 33 ♕g5+ ♔h8 34 ♗xh7 ♔xh7 35 h6! and Black has no defence to 36 ♖h1 and 37 ♕g7+) 31 h5 ♕h6 32 ♗g5 and I doubt Black can defend against so many pieces.

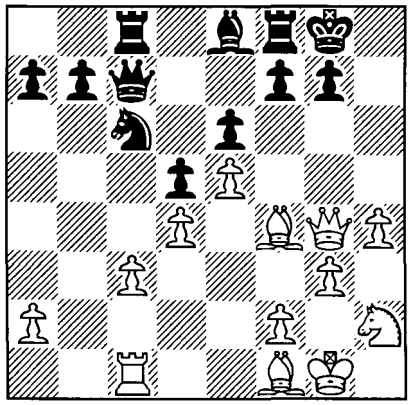
c3) 26...♗d7 27 ♘xh6 gxh6 28 ♗f6+ ♖g7 29 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 30 ♕f4 ♖h7 31 h5! ♕h6 32 ♗g5 ♕f8 33 ♖h1 with what looks like a mating attack and Black's extra rook is irrelevant.

Of course I can't cover everything here, but suffice it to say that I'm looking forward to reaching this position again!

19 ♕f3 ♗xc1 20 ♖xc1 h5

Mah panics, but his position was already difficult: for example, 20...♗b5 21 ♗f1 ♕a4 22 ♗xb5 ♕xb5 23 ♘g4 (White's queen, bishop and knight are unopposed) 23...♖fe8 24 ♗xh6 gxh6 25 ♘xh6+ ♔h7 26 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 (26...♔xh6 27 g4 mates) 27 ♕f6+ ♔h7 28 ♘g4 and Black cannot prevent mate.

21 ♗f1 ♕c7 22 ♕xh5 ♗e8 23 ♕g4 ♘c6



24 ♗d3

24 h5! is the easiest win, since we can push the pawn through to force an open line for our pieces: 24...♘e7 25 h6 g6 26 h7+! ♔h8 (26...♔xh7 27 ♕h3+ ♔g8 28 ♘g4) 27 ♘f3 and Black has no defence to a plan of ♗f4-g5-f6.

24...♘e7 25 ♗g5

Again 25 h5! was very strong.

25...f5?

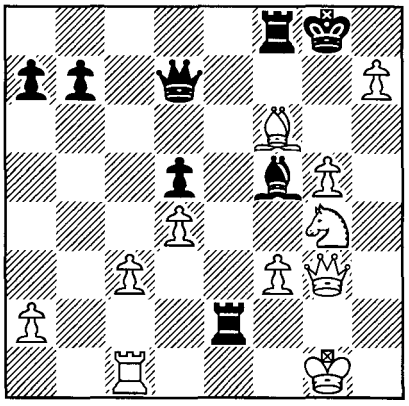
Black sacrifices a further pawn to try and get his pieces over to cover his king, but the pressure is just too strong.

26 exf6 ♘f5 27 ♗xf5

27 ♗f4! ♕d7 28 ♗e5 would have caused

resignation as 28...g6 29 ♕g5 ♕h7 30 ♘g4 is just hopeless.

27...exf5 28 ♕xf5 ♕d7 29 ♕f4 ♗h5 30 g4 ♗g6 31 h5 ♗e4 32 f3 ♗h7 33 h6 gxf6 34 ♗xf6 ♗g6 35 g5 ♖ce8 36 ♘g4 ♖e2 37 ♕g3 ♗f5 38 h7+! 1-0

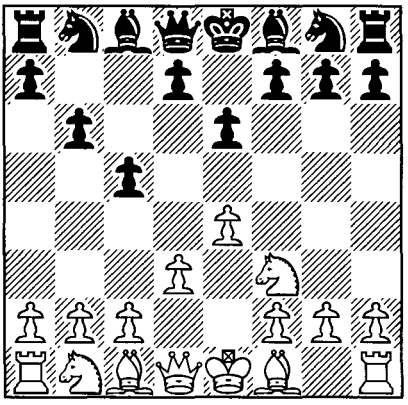


Game 74
P.Harikrishna-D.Navara,D
Reggio Emilia 2008

In the final game of this chapter we'll have a look at some unusual options that Black might occasionally opt for.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 ♘c6

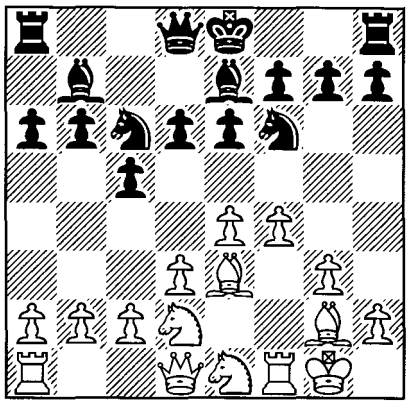
a) 3...b6!? is interesting, developing the c8-bishop before everything else.



Should Black play ...d7-d5 at any point then play will likely transpose to Roiz-Stella in the previous chapter, but Black can also play ...d7-d6 which is more independent although still similar to the previous games. After 4 g3 ♗b7 5 ♗g2 d6 6 0-0 Black has:

a1) Emms mentions that 6...♘f6 is not so accurate as now we can play 7 ♘h4!? followed by advancing on the kingside with f2-f4. It's important to note that 7...♗e7?! allows 8 e5! ♗xg2 9 exf6 ♗xf1 10 fxe7 ♕xe7 11 ♕xf1 and in such a closed position, the two pieces are definitely more useful than the rook and pawn.

a2) After 6...♗e7 Bologan attempted to exploit Black's lack of development with 7 ♘e1!? (7 ♖e1 would be more in the King's Indian Attack spirit and White was on the right side of equality following 7...♘f6 8 ♘bd2 0-0 9 c3 ♘c6 10 a3 ♘e5!? 11 ♘xe5 dxe5 12 ♘c4 ♕c7 13 f4 exf4 14 ♗xf4 ♕c6 15 ♕e2 ♖ad8 in A.Morozevich-V.Ivanchuk, Moscow 2002) 7...♘c6 8 f4 ♘f6 9 ♗e3 a6 10 ♘d2.



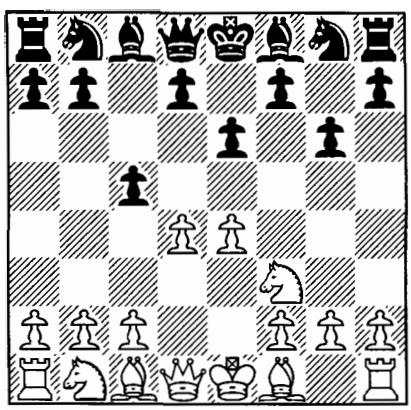
I quite enjoy these positions with my background in the Grand Prix Attack. They should be around level, but I find White's position easier to play. His plan is to pawn-storm Black, commencing with the advance

g3-g4-g5. It is easy for Black to get steamrolled. Thus he tried 10...e5 11 c3 d5!? fighting in the centre, but 12 fxe5 ♘xe5 13 ♗f4 ♘g6 14 e5 ♘d7 15 d4 cxd4 16 cxd4 was more comfortable for White in V.Bologan-A.Zapata, Buenos Aires 2000.

b) 3...g6 has also been tried fairly often. Black's thinking is sound; he wants to develop his bishop on the long diagonal where it is most actively placed, but this allows White a couple of interesting options:

b1) 4 ♗g5!? has only been seen occasionally, but looks like a good version of our favourite 3...♘c6 4 ♘gf3 g6 5 ♗g5 plan: for example, 4...♕b6 5 ♘bd2 when 5...♕xb2 is again critical, although after 6 ♘c4 ♕g7 7 ♖b1 ♘c6 perhaps White could try 8 ♗f4!?, claiming the d6-square. Instead 8 g3 would of course transpose back into our main line.

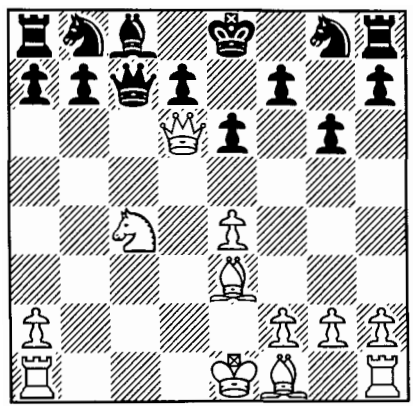
b2) 4 d4! is the most logical step. Playing an Open Sicilian with both e6 and g6 has been rightly condemned as the dark squares, in particular d6, are extremely vulnerable.



Now:

b21) 4...cxd4 only seems to have been played once. White has a pleasant choice over how to recapture, with 5 ♕xd4 ♘f6 6 ♘c3 ♘c6 7 ♕a4 and 5 ♘xd4 a6 6 c4 ♗g7 7 ♘c3 ♘e7 seen in L.Mikhaletz-R.Skrobek, Polanica Zdroj 1999. Here I think 8 ♗e3 is the more accurate as then 8...d5 allows 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♕a4+! ♗d7 (10...♘bc6 11 ♘xc6 wins a pawn, in view of 11...bxc6 12 ♘xd5!) 11 ♕a3 dxe4 12 ♖d1 0-0 13 ♗g5!, leaving Black in a rather awkward state.

b22) 4...♗g7 5 dxc5 ♕a5+ 6 c3 ♕xc5 7 ♗e3 ♕c7 8 ♘a3! ♗xc3+ (necessary as 8...a6 9 ♘c4 is already losing) 9 bxc3 (9 ♘d2!? would also put Black under tremendous pressure) 9...♕xc3+ 10 ♘d2 ♕xa3 11 ♘c4 ♕b4+ 12 ♗d2 ♕c5 13 ♕c7 ♗e3 (13...♕b4+ 14 ♗d2 ♕c5 15 ♗c3 was also terrible: 15...f6 16 ♕d2 is a position that I can't bear even considering), and here in A.Skripchenko-A.Galliamova, Warsaw 2001, the most accurate finish was 14 ♕d6!.

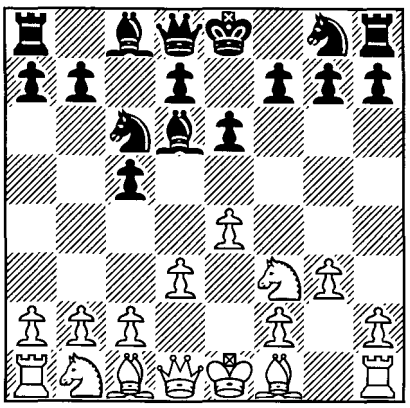


After 14...♕xd6 (or 14...♕c6 15 ♕a3! followed by 16 ♘d6+ and an eventual ♖a1-c1, winning the house) 15 ♘xd6+ White picks up a piece.

c) 3...a6!? has also been tried, but I doubt the positions will be that different from ones we have examined in the last couple of chapters. I'll just give one reference for an idea of how White might proceed: 4 g3 b5 5 ♗g2 ♗b7 6 0-0 d6 7 ♖e1 ♘f6 8 a4 (it makes sense to try and prove that ...b5 was premature) 8...♘bd7 9 axb5 axb5 10 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 11

♘a3 ♗c6 12 c4! b4 (if 12...bxc4 13 ♘xc4 ♗e7 14 ♗f4 e5 15 ♗g5 0-0 16 ♘h4 and White has some useful squares to use) 13 ♘b5! (Black's light-squared bishop is an integral part of his position and thus it's worth a pawn to make him part with it) 13...♕b7 14 d4 ♗xb5 15 cxb5 ♕xb5 16 e5 dxe5 17 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 18 dxe5 ♘d7 19 ♕f3 ♘b8 20 ♕a8 ♗e7 was L.Cyborowski-M.Bartel, Ustron 2007, and here rather than rushing with 21 ♗c6+, 21 ♕a7! would have been very strong, paralysing Black: for instance, 21...c4 22 ♗e3 ♗d8 23 ♖d1 0-0 24 ♕c5 ♕xc5 25 ♗xc5 ♖e8 26 ♗xb4 which would have left Black in a very unpleasant endgame.

4 g3 ♗d6!?



This move has actually been played by a few strong players and so should be taken seriously despite the fact that it looks like a beginner's move. Black's idea is similar to that in the Snake Benoni in which Black reroutes the bishop to c7 before pushing in the centre. I'm rather sceptical that it's worth the extra tempi, but it does make sense to put more pressure on e5 which, as we've seen, is a crucial square in the King's Indian Attack.

5 ♗g2 ♘ge7 6 0-0 ♗c7

Instead 6...0-0 7 ♗e3 b6 8 c3 (8 d4 is also possible: 8...♗a6 9 ♖e1 cxd4 10 ♘xd4 ♖c8 11 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 12 ♘d2 when I think White has a small edge as the bishop on d6 looks rather clumsy) 8...♗c7 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 d5 11 e5 a5 12 ♕d2 ♗a6 13 ♖c1 b5 14 ♘c3 ♗b6 was the typical KIA treatment in L.Yudasin-J.Ehlvest, New York (rapid) 2003. Now 15 a4! b4 16 ♘b5 ♘a7 17 ♗f1 looks quite promising as 17...♕d7 can be met by 18 ♘c7!.

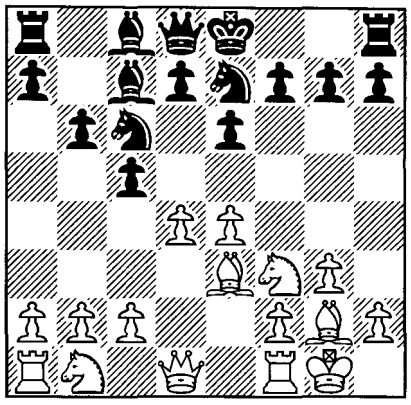
7 ♗e3!

I like this move which doesn't give Black enough time for his attempted ...d7-d5.

7...b6

7...d6 was suggested as an alternative by John Shaw, but after 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 the c7-square looks like a really odd home for the bishop in this sort of Open Sicilian. Nevertheless, I guess this might be playable for Black. The most sensible way to play this for White would be with a Maroczy bind style c2-c4.

8 d4!



White is ahead in development and there's a big hole on d6, so it makes sense to open the position.

8...d5

Black initiates hand-to-hand combat and perhaps unsurprisingly, considering he is behind in development, comes off second best.

8...cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♗a6 10 ♖e1 0-0 was another suggestion by Shaw, but I think that 11 ♘a3! leaves White with the upper hand: for instance, 11...♖c8 12 c3 ♗b8 13 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 14 ♕a4 ♗b7 15 ♖ad1 when the hole on d6 is still a little problematic.

9 exd5 ♘xd5 10 ♗g5 f6

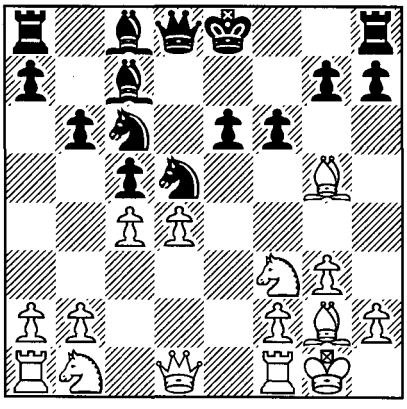
After this Black will always have weaknesses in his camp.

Neither 10...♘ce7 11 c4 nor 10...♘f6 11 ♘e5 are remotely possible. 10...♘de7 is harder to refute, although the pins are extremely awkward for Black to deal with. I like the look of 11 ♘c3! when Black is up against it:

a) 11...0-0 12 dxc5 bxc5 (12...♗a6 13 ♕xd8 ♖axd8 14 cxb6 doesn't give Black any compensation for the pawn) 13 ♕e2 and I can't see any positives in Black's position, so White has a clear edge.

b) 11...h6 12 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 (12...♕xe7 13 ♘e5 again picks up material on the long diagonal) 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 ♕xd8+ ♗xd8 15 ♘e4 and Black is forced to give up the c5-pawn as 15...♗b6? 16 ♘d6+ ♔f8 17 ♘e5 is hopeless.

11 c4!



11...♘de7

As Shaw points out, the bishop isn't edible: 11...fxg5 12 cxd5 exd5 13 ♖e1+ ♔f8 (or 13...♘e7 14 ♘xg5 0-0 15 ♘c3 and d5 will drop and with it at least an exchange) 14 ♘c3 g4 15 dxc5! gxf3 16 ♕xf3+ ♕f6 17 ♘xd5 ♕xf3 18 ♗xf3 (Shaw) leaves Black's position resignable as 18...♗b8 19 ♘xb6 axb6 20 ♗xc6 picks up one of the rooks.

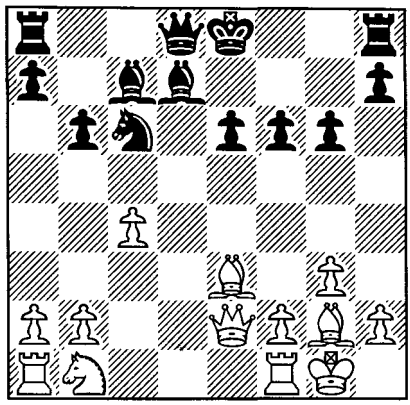
12 ♗e3 cxd4

Perhaps Navara overlooked that this move was forced when he tried 9...d5. The problem is that 12...♘f5? is again met by a discovered attack down the long diagonal with 13 ♘h4!, as noted by Shaw.

13 ♘xd4 ♗d7 14 ♘xc6 ♘xc6

It's strategically desirable to exchange the light-squared bishops but (un)fortunately we have 14...♗xc6? 15 ♗xc6+ ♘xc6 16 ♕a4 and the knight cannot be defended, as 16...♕d7 17 ♖d1 ♗d6 18 c5! picks up the bishop.

15 ♕h5+ g6 16 ♕e2



So after a forced series of moves Navara must have been regretting his aggressive opening play. Not only does Harikrishna have the super-powerful bishop on g2, more space and open lines for his rooks, but Black's king will also never find sanctuary with the kingside pawns advanced. The Indian doesn't play as accurately as he could have done yet White's advantage is large enough for that not to matter.

16...♔f7 17 ♘c3 ♖c8 18 ♘b5 ♗b8

Black must keep both bishops on the board or else he'll get outrun on the diagonals on such an open board.

19 c5!?

19 ♖ad1 ♕e7 20 c5! was slightly more accurate: 20...bxc5 21 ♗xc5 and d7 is loose.

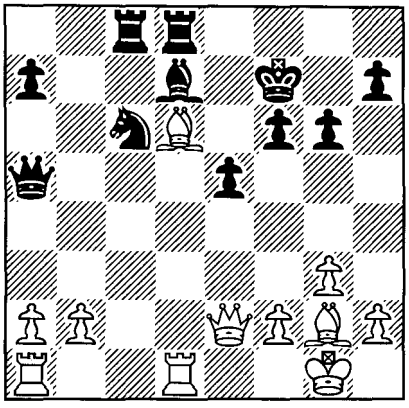
19...bxc5 20 ♗xc5 ♕a5 21 ♖fd1

21 a4 more accurate, tying Black down further.

21...♖hd8

21...♘e5! 22 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 23 ♗xd6 ♗b5 and unfortunately there's no square for the white queen which keeps both bishops, so Black will be able to grovel on after 24 ♕e3 ♘c4, although of course White's still better.

22 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 23 ♗xd6 e5



Black has managed to get his pawn structure on the kingside to look a bit more sensible, but at the cost of his dark-squared bishop.

24 ♖d5

24 b4! was very strong here as 24...♘xb4 25 ♕d2 ♘c6 26 ♕h6 ♔g8 27 ♗f8! would have resulted in a mating attack.

24...♕b6 25 ♗c5 ♕b8 26 ♕a6 ♘e7 27 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 28 ♖ad1

So one advantage has been converted into another. Again it's the weakness of Black's king which decides.

28...♗b5

This swaps off but at the cost of losing material. 28...♕b6 was perhaps better, but 29 ♕a3+ ♔e8 30 ♗f1 would have left Black with a really disgusting position.

29 ♕a3+ ♔e8 30 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 31 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 32 ♕b3!

The queen does everything on this square. It defends d1, hits the bishop and threatens to infiltrate on g8.

32...♗e2 33 ♕g8+ ♔e7 34 ♕xh7+ ♔e6 35 ♗h3+ ♔d5 36 ♕xg6

Two pawns down, Navara really could have resigned at this point.

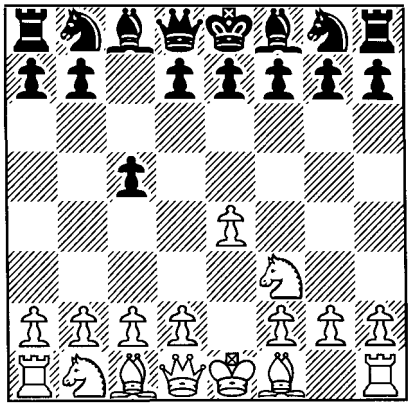
36...♕c7 37 ♗g2+ ♔e6 38 ♕e8+ ♔d6 39 h4 ♕c1+ 40 ♔h2 ♕xb2 41 ♕c6+ ♔e7 42 ♕c5+ ♔e6 43 ♗d5+ 1-0

Conclusion

3...♘c6 4 ♘gf3 g6 5 ♗g5!? is an interesting line which has still not reached the mainstream, but gives White good chances in positions in which your opponent won't be familiar. The critical line seems to be 5...♕b6, 6...♕xb2 and 8...d5, as played in McShane-Volokitin, although Black has to play extremely accurately or he'll fall to an early death. If, for whatever reason, you do not feel comfortable in the 5 ♗g5 lines then 5 ♗g2 is likely to transpose into the later games in this chapter. Paradoxically, the lines investigated in the Bruzon games (Games 71 and 72) are more common, yet I would expect you to face them less. This is because most players play 4...g6 rather than 4...♘ge7 and thus most of the time you should be able to play our 5 ♗g5 ideas.

Chapter Eleven
Other Second Moves For Black

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3



In this chapter I cover Black's other second moves and complete coverage of the Sicilian. The most important sidelines are covered in Games 75 and 76, while the Nimzowitsch Sicilian is examined in Game 77. Game 78 wraps up all the rare lines.

Repertoire Outline

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 g6

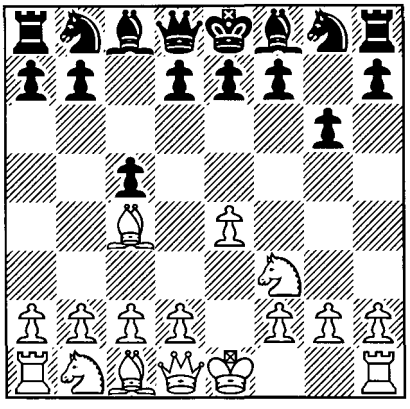
The so called Hyper-Accelerated Dragon, a line I have played myself on a few occasions. Here we'll also consider:

a) 2...b6 is covered in Game 78 which also includes all of Black's alternative second moves.

b) 2...♘f6 is the Nimzowitsch Sicilian when I'm following John Emms' recommendation of 3 e5 ♘d5 4 g3!?, which he examined for *Dangerous Weapons: Anti-Sicilians* and has been played by Sergei Rublevsky amongst others – see Game 77.

c) 2...a6 is the O'Kelly Variation when my suggestion of 3 b4!? is a very interesting pawn sacrifice, as we'll see in Game 75.

3 ♗c4!?



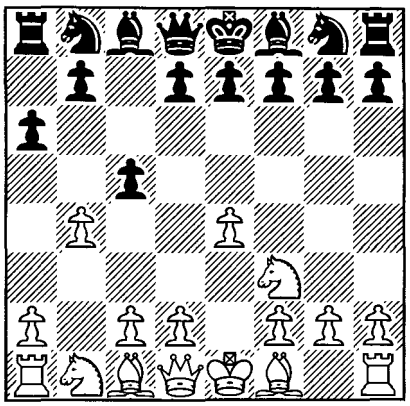
An interesting idea. Admittedly White has scored badly with it, but only due to being highly outrated and I think it's a reasonable try for an advantage – see Game 76.

Game 75
T.Hillarp Persson-S.Van Eijk
Porto Mannu 2009

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 a6

The O'Kelly Variation. A sideline I've dabbled with myself. Black's position is very flexible; he wishes to wait until White has committed to a set-up before deciding how to develop. Of course White has many different options, but I think we should continue our task of taking Black outside his comfort zone with:

3 b4!?



This is a pawn sacrifice which Keres came up with. It is obviously a very good version of the Wing Gambit as 2 ♘f3 is a lot more useful than 2...a6. If you don't feel like sacrificing a pawn then White obviously has a lot of good alternatives.

3 g3!?, playing in the style of the King's Indian Attack, as we do against 2...e6, is sensible. The game might proceed 3...b5 4 ♗g2 ♗b7 5 ♕e2!? e6 (changing tack with 5...d6 6 d4!? cxd4 7 ♘xd4 e5 8 ♘f5 g6 9 ♘e3 ♘f6 10 ♘c3 ♗g7 11 0-0 ♘c6 12 ♘cd5 ♘d4 13 ♕d1 0-0 14 c3 ♘e6 15 a4 resembled a good Najdorf for White in B.Smith-I.Krush, US Internet League 2007) 6 d3 and we have a fairly similar position to those examined in the 2...e6 chapters. Of course Black is very flexible and can choose different set-ups after 2...a6, but White's play is fairly logical.

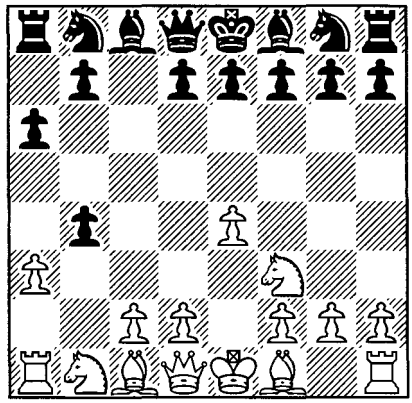
3 c3 and 3 c4 are probably the critical moves. In the latter White is aiming for a Maroczy bind type formation in an Open Sicilian, but this is a relatively theoretical choice. Meanwhile with the former White transposes to the c3 Sicilian where he claims that ...a6 is not the most useful move.

3...d5

Van Eijk responds to an attack on the wing with one in the centre, but White keeps an advantage after this. Alternatives:

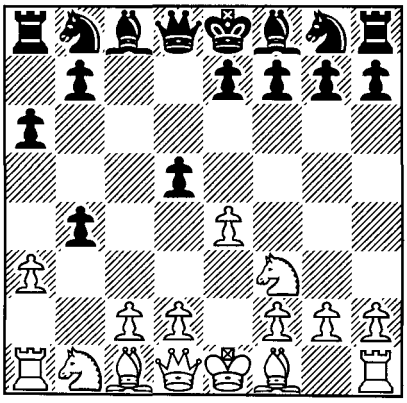
a) 3...d6 has also been tried a couple of times, but is hardly a critical test of our idea and after 4 bxc5 dxc5 5 ♗e2 ♘f6 6 d3 ♘c6 7 ♘bd2 e6 8 0-0 ♗e7 9 ♗b2 0-0 in B.Van der Lijn-T.Levers, Cappelle la Grande 1995, 10 a4 ♕c7 11 ♘c4 would have left White with a safe advantage.

b) Taking the pawn must be the critical test, 3...cxb4 4 a3 and then:



b1) 4...e6 is reasonably sensible, although 5 axb4 ♗xb4 6 c3 ♗e7 7 d4 d6 8 ♗d3 ♘f6 9 0-0 ♘bd7 (T.Tukhvatullin-R.Gabdrakhmanov, Kazan 2008) 10 ♘bd2 0-0 11 ♗a3 leaves White with his typical compensation on the queenside and in the centre.

b2) The pawn thrust 4...d5 is very similar to the game and is rather popular.

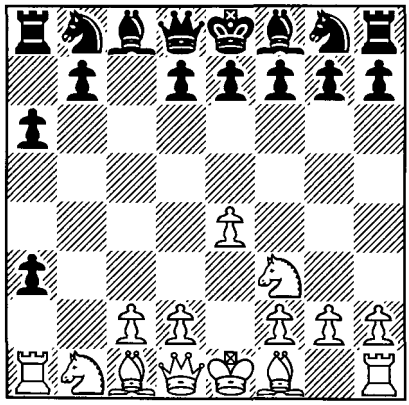


I think this can be traced back to the fact that in the analogous position (1 e4 c5 2 b4 cxb4 3 a3) Black's accepted theoretical response is 3...d5. However, here White has a much better version: 5 exd5 ♕xd5 (5...♘f6 6 axb4 ♘xd5 7 b5, J.Rudd-M.Franklin, Coulsdon 2008, is better for White with his queenside and central play) 6 axb4 ♕e4+ (this is Black's only way to remain a pawn up, but he loses a lot of time) 7 ♗e2 ♕xb4 8 ♘a3 ♕d6 9 d4 ♗d7 10 0-0 ♘c6 11 ♘c4 ♕c7 12 d5 ♘a7 13 ♘fe5 ♘f6 14 ♗f4 ♕d8 15 ♘a5 ♗c8 16 ♗f3 g6 17 d6! exd6 18 ♘ec4 d5 19 ♖e1+ ♘e4 20 ♗xe4 dxe4 21 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 22 ♘b6 left Black's position a sorry sight in J.Radlovacki-M.Markovic, Budva 2003.

b3) 4...b5 attempts to make use of 2...a6 and was the suggestion of John Emms in his chapter on the O'Kelly for *Dangerous Weapons: The Sicilian*, but I think White has a solid edge here: 5 axb4 ♗b7 6 ♗d3!? ♘c6 7 c3! g6 8 ♗c2 d5 9 e5 ♕c7 10 d4 left White with a very pleasant space advantage and attacking chances on both flanks in L.Mikhaletz-I.Csom, Budapest 1998.

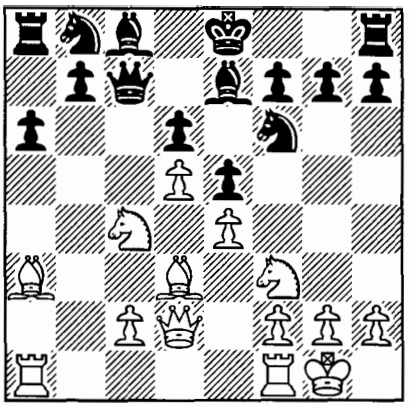
b4) 4...♘f6!? is another way to keep the pawn, but Black loses a lot of time with his knight: 5 e5 ♘d5 6 axb4 ♘xb4 was D.Andreikin-J.Dorfman, Internet (blitz) 2006, when 7 c3 ♘d5 8 d4 e6 9 ♗d3 again leaves White with very good compensation and play on both sides of the board.

b5) 4...bxa3 with a further divide:



b51) After 5 ♗xa3 d6 6 d4 (6 ♗c4!? has also been tried: for example, 6...♕c7 7 ♕e2 e6 8 0-0 ♘d7 9 d4 ♘gf6 10 ♘bd2 ♘b6 11 ♗a2 ♗e7 12 c4 ♘fd7 13 ♖fc1 ♘f8 was C.Kennaugh-G.Wall, British League 1998, when 14 e5! dxe5 15 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 16 c5 ♘d5 17 ♘c4 leaves Black in extreme difficulty) White has the centre, open lines on the queenside and a developmental lead which, in my view, compensates adequately for the pawn: 6...e6 (6...♘f6 7 ♗d3 g6 8 h3 ♗g7 9 0-0 0-0 was M.Vokac-R.Kholmov, Trencianske Teplice 1979, when I would advise you to continue 10 ♕e2!? with the idea of meeting 10...♘h5 with 11 ♕e3) 7 ♗d3 ♗e7 (or 7...♘e7 8 ♘bd2 ♘g6 9 g3 e5 10 c3 ♗e7, as in Y.Rantanen-V.Garber, Vantaa 1999,

when 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♘c4 b5 13 ♘e3 ♗h3 14 ♖e1 ♘d7 15 ♘f5 leaves White on top as Black is rather passive) 8 0-0 ♘f6 9 ♘bd2 ♘c6 10 ♕e2 e5 11 d5 ♘b8 12 ♘c4 ♕c7 was R.Felgaer-J.Cubas, Mar del Plata 2001, when I like 13 ♕d2!.



White has the idea of putting further pressure on d6: 13...♘bd7 14 ♕a5! b6 15 ♕b4 0-0 16 ♘cxe5! ♘c5 17 ♘c6 when White regains his pawn and stands very comfortably.

b52) 5 ♘xa3!? is also interesting: for instance, 5...d5 (5...d6 6 d4 ♘f6 7 ♗d3 g6 8 ♗d2 ♗g7 9 ♘c4 looks like very good compensation) 6 exd5 ♘f6 7 c4 g6 and in R.Bressanelli-R.Magrini, Bratto 2005, 8 d4 left White in total control.

Returning to 3...d5:

4 exd5 cxb4 5 c4!?

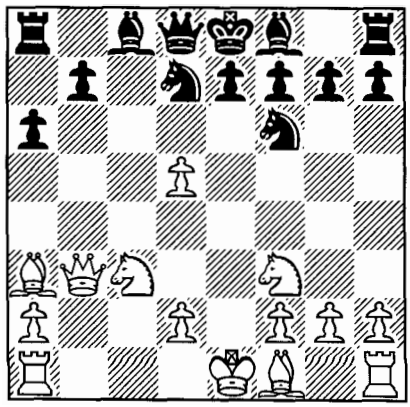
5 a3 would transpose to variation 'b2', above.

5...bxc3

This is forced as the alternative 5...♘f6 6 a3 b5!? (6...e6 7 dxe6 ♗xe6 8 ♗e2 is very comfortable for White who has the central pawns) 7 axb4 bxc4 8 ♗xc4 ♘xd5 9 ♕a4+ ♗d7 10 ♕b3 e6 11 ♗xd5 exd5 12 0-0 ♗e7 13 ♗b2 0-0 14 ♘c3 leaves White with a pleasant initiative.

6 ♘xc3 ♘f6 7 ♕b3 ♘bd7 8 ♗a3

This pawn structure reminds me of certain lines of the Panov-Botvinnik Attack. White's structure looks very bad, but the d5-pawn is preventing Black completing his development and binds him down. Van Eijk decides to try and win the pawn, but this allows White a great initiative.

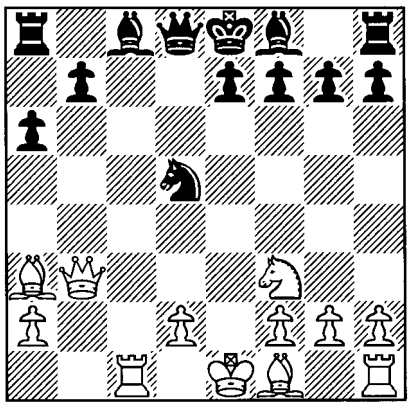


8...♘b6

Black could simply develop with the straightforward 8...g6, but I think White has a pleasant edge after 9 ♖c1 ♗g7 10 g3 0-0 11 ♗g2 (the pawn on d5 is still doing a good job and White has many open lines for his pieces; he has ideas of ♘f3-g5, targeting the f7-pawn, or ♘f3-d4 after Black moves his b-pawn).

9 ♖c1 ♘bxd5 10 ♘xd5 ♘xd5

10...♕xd5? is initially the computer's suggestion, but I think it loses! Following 11 ♗c4 ♕e4+ 12 ♔d1 Black may be a pawn up and has stopped White castling, but there's too much pressure on his own king: 12...e6 13 ♖e1 ♕f5 (13...♕g4 14 h3 ♕xg2 15 ♗xe6! also crashes through) 14 ♖e5 ♕g4 15 h3 ♕xg2 16 ♗xe6! ♗xe6 (16...fxe6 17 ♖xc8+! ♖xc8 18 ♕xe6+ ♔d8 19 ♗e7+ mates) 17 ♕xb7 ♖d8 18 ♕c6+ ♖d7 19 ♕c8+ ♖d8 20 ♖xe6+ fxe6 21 ♕xe6+ and again White has succeeded in proving Black's king to be too weak.



11 ♗c4

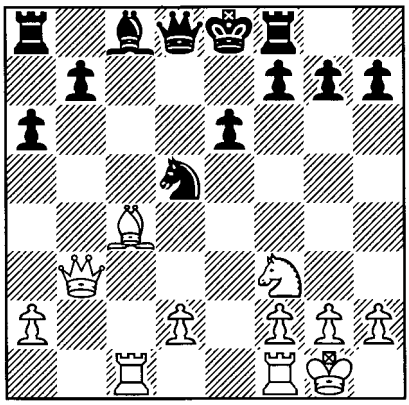
White simply develops and forces Black's king to remain in the centre.

11 ♘e5!? is an interesting alternative, trying to mate Black immediately: 11...e6 12 ♖xc8! (White doesn't want to allow Black to contest the light squares) 12...♕xc8 (12...♖xc8 13 ♕a4+ ♖c6 14 ♘xc6 bxc6 15 ♕xc6+ ♕d7 16 ♕a8+ ♕d8 17 ♕xa6 is at least an extra pawn) 13 ♕a4+ b5 14 ♗xb5+ axb5 15 ♕xb5+ ♔d8 16 ♘xf7+ ♔c7 17 ♗b2! ♕d7 18 ♗e5+ ♔c8 19 ♕c4+ ♔b7 20 ♘xh8. Black has avoided an immediate mate, but White should still stand somewhat better. The black king is still somewhat loose and White has an extra couple of pawns. Of course the position isn't totally clear, as the knight is trapped in the corner, but nonetheless this continuation merits serious consideration.

11...e6 12 ♗xf8 ♖xf8

12...♔xf8 is also possible, but White has great compensation for the pawn after 13 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 (or 13...exd5 14 0-0 g6 15 ♕b2 f6 16 ♖fe1 and Black's king will never find safety, whilst he will also struggle to develop his queenside due to the pressure on b7) 14 ♕b4+ ♔g8 15 0-0 b5 16 ♖c5 ♕d8 17 ♖fc1 ♗b7 18 ♘e5 and Black is under a lot of pressure. In particular 19 ♘xf7 is a threat which Black cannot defend against as after 18...♗d5 19 ♖c7 ♕f8 20 ♘d7! ♕xb4 21 ♖c8+ ♕f8 22 ♘xf8 ♖xc8 23 ♖xc8 White will pick up the immobile h8-rook.

13 0-0



So White has completed his development and it's obvious he retains very good compensation. Black's king is stuck in the centre for the foreseeable future and the c8-bishop is also rather a big problem.

13 a4!? would cut out Black's following possibility and keep Black tied down.

13...♘c7

This is too passive and allows the Swedish Grandmaster (who really is named after a certain character from Winnie the Pooh) too much activity.

13...b5 was necessary when perhaps Black can hold on, but White is certainly the side for preference: 14 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 15 ♕b4 ♗d7 16 ♕g4 ♖g8 17 d4 f6 18 ♖c5 ♕xa2 19 d5 and I don't think Black will survive even if a computer might find the draw.

14 ♕c2 g6 15 ♗b3 ♘b5

15...♘d5 16 ♖fe1 would force Black to move the knight again to be able to move his queenside.

16 d4

Tiger prepares to use his pawn as battering ram to open up Black's king.

16...f6

The pawn is invulnerable: 16...♘xd4? 17 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 18 ♖fd1 and Black gets mated after 18...♕f6 (or 18...♕b4 19 ♕c7) 19 ♗a4+ b5 20 ♕c6+.

17 ♖fd1 ♘d6 18 h4!?

The right plan. It's important to find some open lines towards Black's king. However 18 ♘e5! was stronger when Black becomes completely tied down: 18...♘b5 (18...♘f5 19 ♗a4+) 19 ♘c4 ♘d6 20 d5 e5 21 ♕d2 ♖f7 22 ♕b4 ♘xc4 23 ♗xc4 b5 24 ♗b3 and White will achieve d5-d6 when there will be too many weak squares in Black's camp.

18...♔f7

18...♗d7 was a more accurate defence so that 19 h5 can be met by 19...♖c8, although here 19 ♕d2 ♖c8 20 ♖e1 ♔f7 21 ♕f4 keeps the advantage.

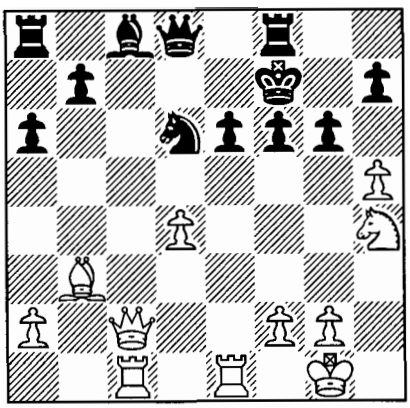
19 h5 ♕e7 20 ♖e1

20 ♘h4!? f5 21 ♘f3, gaining the important e5-outpost, could have been played immediately.

20...♕d8

20...♔g7 21 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 22 d5 would regain the pawn, but at least Black is under slightly less pressure this way.

21 ♘h4!



21...f5 22 ♘f3?!

Hardly bad, but there was better:

a) 22 d5!? looks very strong: 22...exd5 (or 22...♕xh4 23 dxe6+ ♔e8 24 ♗a4+ ♘b5 25 e7 ♖f7 26 ♕xc8+!) 23 ♕b2! and Black's king cannot survive due to White's complete control of the a1-h8 and a2-g8 diagonals. Thus 22...e5 is forced when 23 ♕c7+ ♕xc7 24 ♖xc7+ ♔f6 25 ♖xh7 is clearly better for White.

b) 22 ♕c7+! looks simplest: 22...♕xc7 23 ♖xc7+ ♔f6 24 ♖xh7 and White will start picking off Black's loose pawns.

22...♘e8?!

Black defends c7, but this is far too passive.

22...♘e4 was necessary, although 23 ♕c7+ ♕xc7 24 ♖xc7+ ♔g8 (24...♔f6 is better, but 25 ♖xh7 gxh5 26 ♘e5 leaves Black under a huge bind) 25 ♖ec1 and, despite the queen exchange, the pressure on Black's king's has only increased.

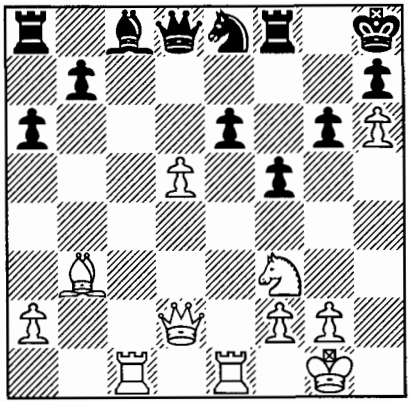
23 ♕d2! ♔g7

The only way to prevent the queen penetrating Black's position via h6.

24 h6+

24 ♘g5! also looks to be immediately winning.

24...♔h8 25 d5!



It's obvious that with every single one of

White's pieces competing in the attack, Black's king won't survive.

25...e5

This doesn't help, although after 25...♘f6 26 dxe6 ♕xd2 27 ♘xd2 the e-pawn will cost Black a piece.

26 ♖xe5

Not the most accurate, although thankfully White has more than enough wins. 26 ♘xe5! ♘d6 27 ♕d4 ♕f6 28 ♖c7, with the threat of ♘e5-f7+, forces Black's instant resignation.

26...♗d7 27 ♖xe8!?

Tiger goes for the interesting finish. 27 d6 ♕f6 28 ♖e7 was a much simpler victory.

27...♗xe8 28 d6?!

28 ♖c7! was a better follow-up, as the rook cannot be taken due to 28...♕xc7 29 ♕d4+ ♔g8 30 d6+.

28...♖f6

28...♕f6 would have forced Tiger to be more accurate, although 29 ♖c7 ♖d8 30 ♘g5 ♗d7 31 ♕e3! ♕xd6 32 ♕c3+ ♕f6 33 ♕d2 leaves too much pressure on Black's position.

29 ♖c7 ♕xd6 30 ♕c3 ♗a4 31 ♘g5! ♗xb3 32 ♖xh7+ ♔g8 33 ♕xb3+ ♖e6 34 ♖g7+ ♔h8 35 ♘f7 mate (1-0)

Game 76
M.Godena-S.Gromovs
Bratto 2005

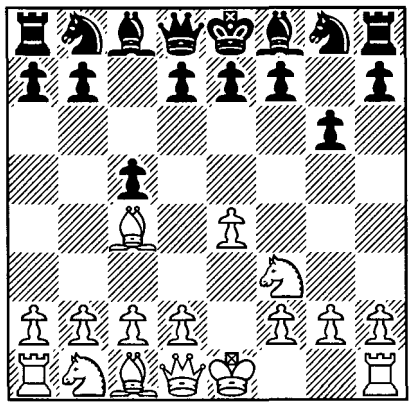
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3

The actual move order of this game was 2 c3 g6 3 ♘f3 ♗g7 4 ♗c4.

2...g6

The Hyper-Accelerated Dragon. This isn't a bad move order if Black is happy to play a Maroczy Bind structure and I have been on black side a fair few times. Of course if you're happy as White to go into either an Accelerated or normal Dragon then this isn't a problem, but I've decided to suggest:

3 ♗c4!?



I like this move order. The main way to combat 2...g6 is either to go into a main line Sicilian or to play 3 c3, but this allows Black to transpose into a variation of the c3 Sicilian should he so choose with 3...d5.

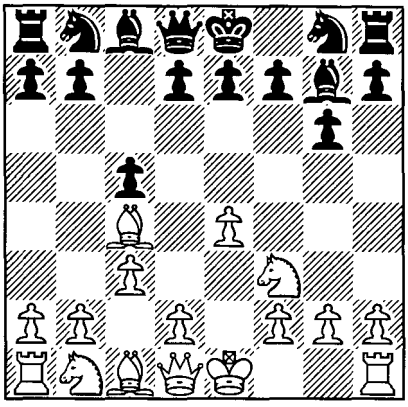
I have also tried 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♕xd4 ♘f6 with both colours, but I'm not convinced of any great advantage here.

3 ♗c4 is rather rare and so is likely to catch your opponents off guard. White plans to create a pawn centre with c2-c3 and d2-d4 and if Black doesn't fight actively in the centre then he will be significantly worse.

3...♗g7

Should Black try an immediate 3...e6?! we can exploit his dark-square holes by opening up the game: 4 d4! and Black is already struggling. A recent game didn't last long: 4...cxd4 5 ♕xd4 ♘f6 6 ♗g5 ♗g7? (6...♗e7 was necessary, but 7 ♘c3 h6 8 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 9 e5 ♘c6 10 ♕e3 ♗g7 11 ♘b5 is quite unpleasant) 7 e5 ♘c6 8 ♕h4 ♕a5+ 9 ♗d2 ♘b4 10 exf6 ♘xc2+ 11 ♔d1 ♕f5 12 fxg7 ♖g8 13 ♘d4 ♘xd4 14 ♕xd4 1-0, J.Mejzini-M.Anderson, Sydney 2009.

4 c3



The Italian GM Michele Godena has played this position a few times and obviously believes in White's set-up.

4...e6

This must be the critical test of our idea. Black intends to play ...d7-d5 as soon as possible. However, there are alternatives.

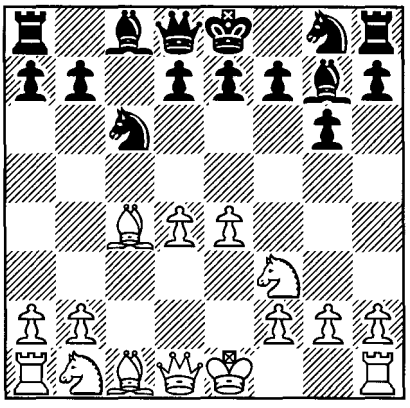
a) In practice Black has played 4...d6 almost as often as 4...e6. However, I think White can look forward to a comfortable advantage here: 5 d4 cxd4 6 cxd4 ♘f6 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 ♗b3 (8 0-0!? was the choice of the young Italian Fabiano Caruana against Bu Xiangzhi in Cap d'Agde 2008, but this allows Black the typical tactic of 8...♘xe4 9 ♗xf7+!? ♖xf7 10 ♘xe4 when the position was rather complicated, but I tend to favour Black's bishops even if White did go on to win) 8...♘c6 9 h3 has been reached in two games of Godena, both against the same opponent!

a1) In the first Black tried 9...♘a5 10 ♗c2 d5 11 e5 ♘e8 12 h4!? (feeling aggressive; 12 0-0 is at least a little better for White) 12...♗g4 13 h5 ♘c7 (13...♗xh5? would allow the classic Greek Gift with 14 ♖xh5! gxh5 15 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 16 ♘g5+ ♔g6 17 ♘e2!, with a decisive attack) 14 ♕d2 ♘e6 15 hxg6 fxg6 16 ♘g5 ♘c4 17 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 18 ♕g5 ♗f5 19 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 20 ♕g4 and Black had defended well, but White still had decent pressure in M.Godena-A.Habibi, Lugano 2007.

a2) In the second game Habibi deviated with 9...b6 10 0-0 ♘a5 11 ♗c2 (I also like the look of 11 e5 dxe5 12 dxe5 ♘xb3 13 axb3 ♕xd1 14 ♖xd1 ♘d7 15 ♗f4 when White has very strong pressure) 11...♗b7 12 ♕e2 d5 13 e5 ♘e8 14 ♘g5 and again White had the start of a decent kingside attack in M.Godena-A.Habibi, Lugano 2008.

a3) Interestingly Godena had this position a third time (from a different move order) and there his opponent tried 9...b5, but 10 0-0! b4 11 ♘d5 ♗b7 (11...♘xe4? 12 ♕c2 wins a knight) 12 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 13 ♗h6 ♗g7 14 ♕d2 a5 15 ♖fe1 a4 16 ♗d5 ♕b6 17 ♖ac1 ♖ac8 18 ♖c4 ♖b8 19 ♖ec1 ♖fc8 20 ♔h2 (20 ♕f4 ♘d8 keeps Black on the board) left Black under extreme pressure. Here he blinked with 20...♗a8? and after 21 ♕f4! e6 he could no longer play ...♘c6-d8 as c8 is hanging. Thus after 22 ♘g5 he was forced to resign in M.Godena-D.Dvirnyy, Bratto 2007.

b) 4...♘c6 5 d4 cxd4 6 cxd4 looks promising for White:



b1) 6...♕b6 7 e5 d6 8 0-0 dxe5 9 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 10 dxe5 ♘xe5 11 ♗b3 ♘f6 12 ♕e2 ♘c6 13 ♗h6 ♘d4 14 ♕e5 ♘xb3 15 axb3

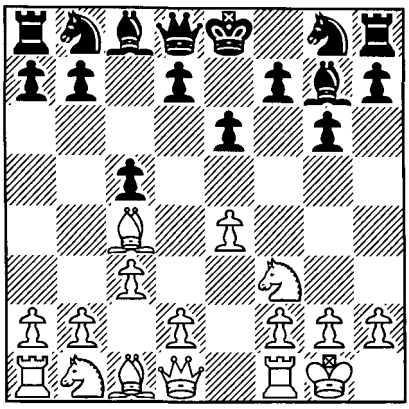
♕e6 16 ♕c3 leaves White with great play for the pawn as Black will never be able to get his king to safety, J.Rubinstein-B.Wexler, Mar del Plata 1962.

b2) 6...e6 7 d5! favours White: 7...exd5 8 exd5 ♕e7+ 9 ♗e2 ♘e5 10 0-0 d6 (E.Shaposhnikov-B.Savchenko, Internet (blitz) 2004) 11 ♘xe5! dxe5 (11...♗xe5 12 ♘a3 followed by 13 ♘c4 is good for White) 12 d6 ♕d8 13 ♕d5! leaves Black in immediate trouble, i.e. 13...a6 14 ♖d1 when Black cannot develop his pieces without dropping material.

b3) 6...d6 7 ♘c3 would transpose to variation 'a'.

c) 4...♕c7 5 0-0 ♘c6 6 ♖e1 d6 7 d4 cxd4 8 cxd4 e6 9 ♘c3 ♘xd4?! 10 ♘xd4 ♕xc4 11 ♘db5 left Black with significant problems in N.Short-M.Cardona, Ajelat 2003.

5 0-0



5...♘e7

Again there are alternatives:

a) 5...d5 6 exd5 exd5 7 ♗b5+ ♗d7 8 ♕e2+ ♘e7 9 ♖e1 c4 10 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 11 b3! ♘bc6 (11...cxb3 12 axb3 ♘bc6 13 b4 is rather awkward for Black to deal with) 12 bxc4 0-0 13 ♘a3 and Black had insufficient compensation for the pawn, N.Mokhna-D.Pudovkin, Krasnodar 2004.

b) 5...♘c6 6 d4 cxd4 7 ♘xd4!? is similar to our main game. Now:

b1) 7...♘f6 8 ♖e1 0-0 9 e5 ♘d5 10 ♗xd5 exd5 11 ♗f4 ♕b6 12 ♘b3 a5 was A.Kvon-M.Dzhumaev, Tashkent 2007, and here 13 ♗e3 ♕d8 14 ♕xd5 ♗xe5 15 ♘a3 leaves White with a small but definite edge.

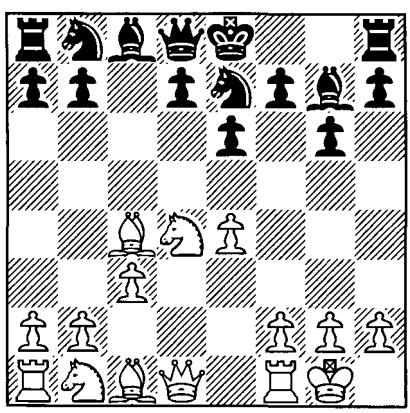
b2) 7...a6 8 ♗e3 d5 9 exd5 exd5 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 ♖e1 ♘e7 12 ♗f1 0-0 13 ♘d2 ♖b8 14 ♘b3 favoured White in J.Rasin-W.Paschall, Boylston 1995, as he could play on the dark squares.

b3) 7...♘xd4 8 cxd4 ♘e7 9 d5 exd5 10 exd5 d6 11 ♖e1 0-0 12 ♗g5 ♖e8 was M.Kaminski-T.Markowski, Ksiaz 1998, when 13 ♕d2 ♗f5 14 ♘c3 ♖c8 15 ♗b5 ♗d7 16 ♗d3 leaves White with a small edge as Black has problems activating his pieces.

6 d4 cxd4

Or 6...d5 7 exd5 exd5 8 ♗b5+ ♗d7 9 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 10 ♗g5 f6 11 ♗f4 ♕b6, as in M.Karalkin-V.Guivan, Mukachevo 2009, when 12 ♖e1 ♔f7 13 dxc5 ♘xc5 14 ♗e3 ♕c6 15 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 16 ♕b3 would have been very pleasant.

7 ♘xd4!?



The Italian GM keeps the d-file open so he can try to utilize the weakness of d6.

7...a6

Naturally Gromovs was concerned about a knight hop into d6, but this allows

White a pleasant edge. Black shouldn't worry about the b5-square, but should play 7...0-0! when White has various options:

a) 8 ♘b5 d5 is fine for Black.

b) 8 ♖e1!? d5 9 exd5 ♘xd5 10 ♘d2 ♘c6 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♘e4 is slightly better for White thanks to Black's compromised queenside.

c) Playing as in the game with 8 ♗g5 is also possible when 8...a6 would transpose, but Black should play 8...♘bc6. However, he has to see that following 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 ♕d6 (10 ♘d2!?), he can play 10...♘f5! (10...f6?! 11 ♗e3 ♖f7? 12 ♗xe6 was a very quick win. for White in W.Kugelmann-H.Westerman, Bad Wörishofen 2008) 11 ♕d2 ♘e7, leaving White the option to repeat or to play for more with 12 ♖e1 when the position is unclear. Black is rather passive, but has a strong centre if he can start to get it rolling, so we should endeavour to keep him under a strong bind.

8 ♗g5 0-0

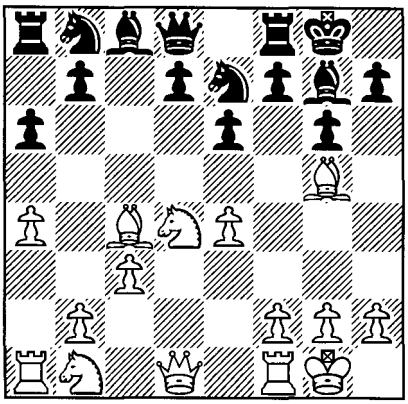
The most logical, but Black has tried other moves:

a) 8...h6 9 ♗h4 d6 10 f4!? (developing with 10 ♘d2 0-0 11 ♕e2 is also fairly promising or even 10 a4!? like in the game) 10...♕b6 11 ♔h1! ♕c5 (11...♕xb2? 12 ♘b3 g5 13 ♖f2 traps the black queen) 12 ♘a3 ♘bc6 was A.Vajda-W.Paschall, Budapest 2004, when 13 ♘b3! ♕h5 14 ♕xh5 gxh5 15 ♖ad1 ♘g6 16 ♗e1 would have been very strong. Indeed, 16...♔e7 17 f5 ♘ge5 18 ♗h4+ ♔d7 19 fxe6+ fxe6 20 ♘c5+ should already be winning.

b) 8...d6 9 ♘a3 ♘bc6 10 ♘ac2 h6 11 ♗h4 g5 12 ♗g3 e5 13 ♘xc6 bxc6 14 ♘e3 looks very suspicious positionally, D.Lalic-A.Dragojlovic, Sremska Mitrovica 2006.

9 a4

9 ♘d2! is more accurate so that we can respond to 9...♘bc6 with 10 ♘2f3, retaining a central knight. Instead 9...b5 10 ♗d3 shouldn't be anything to worry about, as we can fight back with a2-a4 and Black will have given us a lot of squares.



9...b6

Black can consider too:

a) 9...♘bc6 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 ♕d6:

a1) 11...f6?! (Black's only winning try, but very suspicious) 12 ♗e3 ♕e8 13 ♘d2 ♖f7 14 a5 ♗f8 15 ♕d3 d5 16 ♗a2 ♗b7 17 ♘b3 ♘c8 18 ♘c5 ♘d6 19 ♖fe1 ♖e7 was Y.Shabanov-B.Khanukov, Dresden 2006, when 20 ♗d4 ♕f7 21 e5 fxe5 22 ♗xe5 would have successfully completed the task of binding Black completely down.

a2) 11...♘f5! should have been tried and after 12 ♕d2 ♘e7 13 ♖e1 f6 14 ♗f4 d5 15 ♗a2 ♔h8 16 ♘a3 we have a fight between Black's central pawn mass and White's minor pieces. Black should be careful not to advance his pawns too far or they will be difficult to defend. Meanwhile we will try to use the vulnerable squares in Black's camp and subsequently undermine his centre. A formation of ♗c5, ♘b4 and a5 looks very powerful.

b) 9...h6! is probably the strongest, since 10 ♗h4 (10 ♗e3 d5 11 exd5 ♘xd5 12 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 13 ♘f3 is still slightly more comfortable for White thanks to the weakness on

b6) 10...♘bc6! 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♕d6?! allows 12...♘f5!.

10 ♖e1 d6 11 ♘a3

The opening has been a definite success. White has a plan to target the d6-pawn and has very easy development. Black, on the other hand, has been stifled and struggles to play either of the desirable ...b6-b5 or ...d6-d5 breaks.

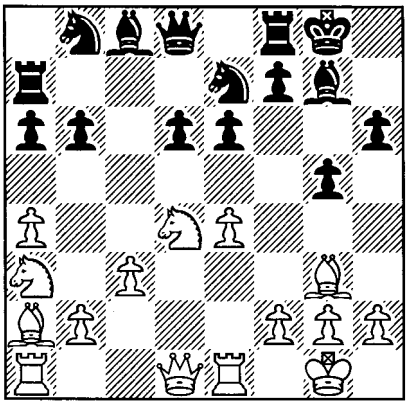
11...♖a7 12 ♗a2

12 ♕d2 also looks strong as Black really suffers to coordinate his pieces.

12...h6 13 ♗h4 g5

The start of a suspect plan, but Black was struggling to find any play whatsoever and the pin was annoying him. However, he has some problems to coordinate his pieces, as shown by 13...♖c7 14 ♘c4!, while 13...♗b7 makes the rook look rather foolish. Here we should continue to pressure d6: 14 ♕e2 (14 ♗g3!?) 14...♘bc6 15 ♘f3 ♕c7 16 ♖ad1 g5 17 ♗g3 ♘e5 18 h4!, leaving Black with problems on both sides of the board.

14 ♗g3

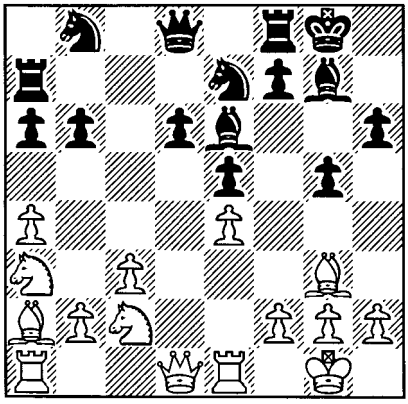


14...e5?!

This move is incredibly ugly. Gromovs was concerned about his d6-pawn, but this leaves him with too many holes on the light squares. This reminds me of a certain King's Indian line, but here White's dark-squared bishop has a healthy life to look forward to following f2-f3, while Black's g7 bishop isn't so fortunate.

14...♘g6 would have made better use of Black's previous move. Here 15 ♘c4 ♘e5 16 ♘f3 looks very tempting, but perhaps 16 ♕e2 ♕c7 17 h4! is stronger with a very pleasant position. The problem with 16 ♘f3 is that 16...♘xc4 17 ♗xc4 ♘c6! allows Black the tactic 18 ♕xd6 ♖d7! 19 ♕xc6 ♗b7 with decent compensation for the pawn following 20 ♗c7 ♗xc6 21 ♗xd8 ♖fxd8.

15 ♘dc2 ♗e6



16 ♘e3

Eyeing the vulnerable d5- and f5-squares. 16 ♗xe6 fxe6 17 ♕g4 ♕d7 18 ♖ed1 would also have been very strong as Black struggles to guard both the d6- and b6- weaknesses, as well as against a king-side attack, starting with h2-h4. Instead Godena decides it's better to keep his large structural advantage with Black incredibly weak on the light squares.

16...♗xa2 17 ♖xa2 ♖d7 18 ♘d5

18 ♕b3 would allow Black to liberate himself with 18...d5, although his position remains highly unpleasant following 19 exd5 ♘xd5 20 ♘f5 ♘c6 21 ♘c4 ♖e8 22 ♖aa1 when he cannot defend both b6 and e5 adequately.

18...♘bc6 19 ♖a1 ♘xd5 20 ♕xd5 ♘e7 21 ♕b3 ♕c7

Black can not break with 21...d5 as 22 exd5 ♖xd5 23 ♘c4 picks up either b6 or e5.

22 ♘c4 ♖b8 23 ♘e3 b5

Gromovs has finally found a break, but his temporary initiative is easily contained. Perhaps his best hope was breaking in the centre: 23...♕c6 24 f3 d5. After 25 ♖ad1 dxe4 26 ♖xd7 ♕xd7 27 fxe4 White would continue to have the upper hand, but at least Black's position has improved.

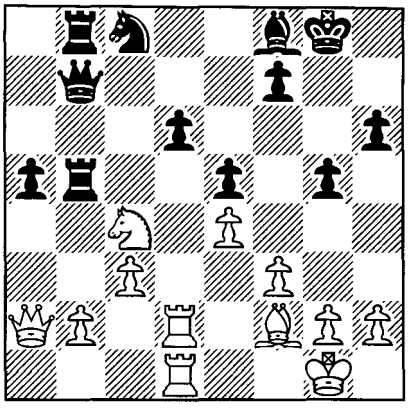
24 axb5 ♖xb5 25 ♕a2 a5 26 ♖ad1 ♖d8 27 ♖d2 ♖db8 28 ♖ed1

Slightly inaccurate: 28 ♘c4! was a better move to avoid Black's next possibility when 28...♘c8 29 ♖ed1 ♕c6 30 f3 a4 31 ♗f2 is very good for White.

28...♕b7

28...♖b3! would have blocked White's queen in on a2 and prevented White's ♘e3-c4. However, we'd still be better with 29 h4!, targeting Black's weak kingside.

29 ♘c4! ♘c8 30 f3 ♗f8 31 ♗f2

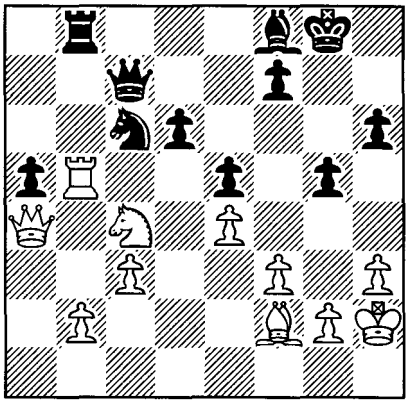


All of White's pieces now coordinate perfectly.

31...♕c7 32 h3 ♖a8 33 ♕a4 ♖ab8 34 ♖d5

Black's temporary counterplay has been completely neutralized and he is left with a further weakness on a5.

34...♘a7 35 ♔h2 ♖xd5 36 ♖xd5 ♘c6 37 ♖b5!



Straightforward play. Godena would like to exchange everything leaving his knight vs Black's terrible bishop.

37...♖a8 38 ♘b6 ♖b8 39 ♘d5 ♕d8 40 ♖xb8 ♘xb8 41 ♗b6 ♕c8 42 ♕xa5

Finally a pawn drops and already Black has no hope. He tries to generate some counterplay on the queenside, but Godena converts very comfortably.

42...♘d7 43 b4 h5 44 ♗d8 g4 45 ♕c7! ♕xc7 46 ♗xc7 gxf3 47 gxf3 f6 48 ♘b6 ♘xb6 49 ♗xb6 ♔f7 50 b5 ♔e6 51 c4 ♗h6 52 ♗d8 ♗e3 53 ♔g3 f5 54 ♔h4 1-0

Game 77
E.Rozentalis-C.Landenbergue
French League 2009

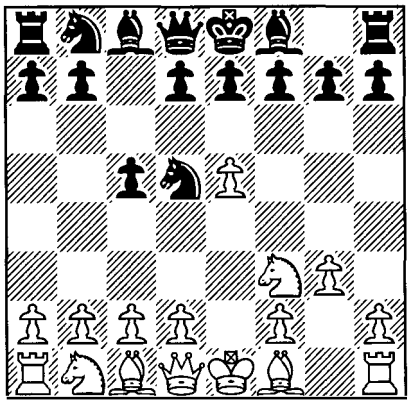
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6

The Nimzowitsch Variation is an interesting attempt to unbalance the position immediately. The line is similar to the Alekhine: Black will lose tempi as his knight gets kicked around, but hopes to exploit White's over-advanced pawns.

3 e5 ♘d5 4 g3!?

Sensible; we simply play a King's Indian

Attack-style position and therefore we don't need to know tons of theory.



4...d6

Alternatively:

a) 4...♘c6 5 ♗g2 is likely to transpose. The only independent options are:

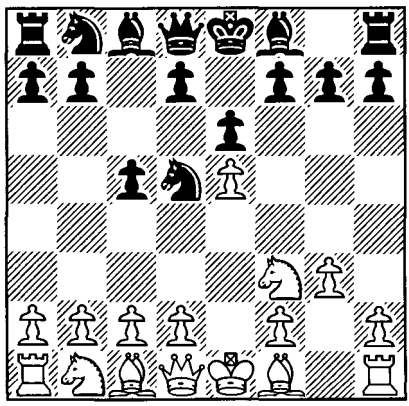
a1) 5...♕c7 attacks the e5-pawn, but we don't have to defend it: 6 0-0! ♘xe5 7 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 8 d4! cxd4 9 ♖e1 ♕d6 was P.Popovic-M.Bjelajac, Novi Sad 1981, when Bjelajac has suggested 10 ♕xd4 ♕b4 11 ♕d1 with more than adequate compensation for the pawn thanks to White's large lead in development and the g2-bishop cutting down the long diagonal. John Emms continued the line with 11...♘f6 12 ♘c3 e6 13 a3 ♕a5 14 ♗f4 ♗e7 15 ♕d3 a6 (15...0-0 16 ♘b5 forces 16...♘e8 to keep the exchange, but after 17 c4 White has very promising play) 16 ♗d6 ♕d8 17 ♘a4 0-0 18 ♖ad1 and Black's pieces are a rather sorry sight.

a2) 5...g6 6 0-0 ♗g7 with a further divide:

a21) 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♘xd4 ♘db4 9 c3 ♘a6 (J.Van der Wiel-Y.Afek, Wijk aan Zee 2006) 10 f4 0-0 11 ♗e3 and White's extra space and strong bishops must count for a little.

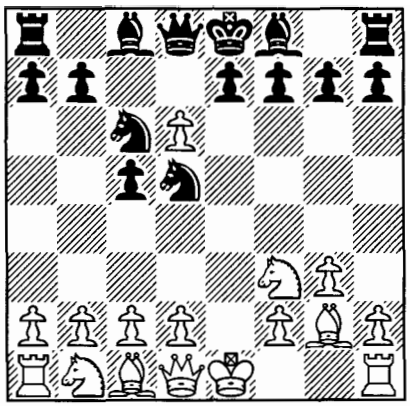
a22) Emms' suggestion of 7 ♖e1 0-0 8 ♘c3 also looks decent: 8...♘c7 (8...♘xc3 9 dxc3! and Black has problems developing his queenside, as 9...d6 10 exd6 exd6 can be met by 11 ♘g5, intending 12 ♘e4 to pick up the d6-pawn) 9 d3 ♘e6 10 ♘d5 d6 11 exd6 ♕xd6 12 c4 ♘c7 13 ♘g5! ♘xd5 14 cxd5 ♘b4 was W.Pietzsch-F.Baumbach, Colditz 1967, when Emms suggests 15 ♗f4 ♕a6 16 ♖xe7 ♗f6 (16...♗xb2 17 d6!) 17 d6! ♗xe7 18 dxe7 ♖e8 19 ♘e4 ♖xe7 20 ♘xc5 ♕b6 21 d4 and White's raking bishop-pair offers him good compensation.

b) 4...e6 is a try, although the positions are likely to be very similar to the game:



5 ♗g2 ♘c6 6 0-0 d6 (or 6...♗e7 7 c4 ♘db4 8 d3 d6 9 a3 ♘a6 10 exd6 ♕xd6 11 ♘c3 0-0 12 ♗f4 ♕d8 13 ♕e2 ♗d6, as in S.Rublevsky-A.Belozerov, Internet (blitz) 2004, when 14 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 15 ♘b5 ♕e7 16 d4 cxd4 17 ♘bxd4 ♘xd4 18 ♘xd4 leaves White with a comfortable edge, as Black will always struggle to match the g2-bishop while White's knight is also far more actively situated) 7 exd6 ♗xd6 8 d4 0-0 9 c4 ♘de7 (9...♘b6 10 dxc5 ♗xc5 11 ♕e2 ♘d4 12 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 13 ♘d2 ♗e7 14 ♖b1, as suggested by Jansa, looks good for White; the idea is b3-b4 and ♗c1-b2 when the two bishops will control almost the whole board) 10 ♘c3 cxd4 11 ♘xd4 ♗e5 12 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 13 ♗e3 was pleasant for White in V.Jansa-M.Krasenkow, Hamburg 1992.

5 ♗g2 ♘c6 6 exd6

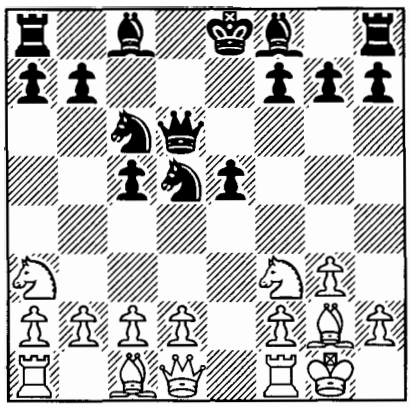


6...e6

Planning to recapture with the bishop. 6...exd6 has also been tried, but 7 0-0 ♗e7 8 d4 0-0 9 ♘a3 ♗f5 10 c3 ♖c8 11 ♖e1 ♗f6 12 ♘h4 ♗xh4 13 ♗xd5 ♗f6 14 dxc5 dxc5 15 ♗f4 ♕d7 16 ♘c4 ♗g4 17 ♗f3 ♕xd1 18 ♗xd1 ♗xd1 19 ♖axd1 left White with a clear advantage in the endgame, F.Nijboer-J.Van der Wiel, Wijk aan Zee 2003.

Instead 6...♕xd6 has typically been the main line, but again White retains his advantage thanks to his strong light-squared bishop after 7 0-0:

a) Against 7...e5 8 ♘a3! is very strong when it's not so easy for Black to keep hold of the centre.



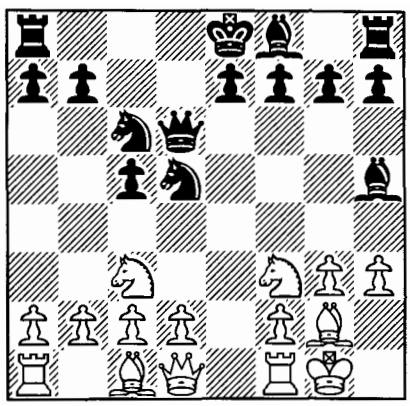
P.Popovic-B.Ivanovic, Belgrade 1987, continued 8...♘b6 9 ♘b5 ♕d7 10 ♖e1 ♗e7 11 a4 f6 when I like John Emms' suggestion of 12 ♘h4!? with the idea that 12...0-0 13 a5 ♘c4 14 ♘c7! (classic deflection) 14...♕xc7 15 ♗d5+ ♔h8 16 ♕h5 wins material.

b) 7...g6 is also mooted by Emms, but his suggestion of 8 d4 ♗g7 9 c4 ♘b6 10 d5 ♘e5 (or 10...♘a5 11 ♘a3! and the pawn cannot be taken due to ♕d1-a4+ at the end) 11 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 12 ♕e2 0-0 13 ♖e1 gives White an obvious advantage.

c) 7...♗g4 seems critical and after 8 h3:

c1) 8...♗xf3 is the solid option, but White should have a safe edge thanks to his uncontested g2-bishop: 9 ♕xf3 e6 10 ♘c3 ♖d8 was S.Rublevsky-A.Khalifman, Kazan 2001, when Emms suggests 11 ♖e1 ♗e7 12 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 13 ♕g4 ♕d4 14 ♗xc6+ bxc6 15 ♖e4 ♕f6 16 d3 0-0 17 ♗f4 with a typical structural advantage we have seen in the 3 ♗b5 chapters.

c2) 8...♗h5 9 ♘c3 with a further split:



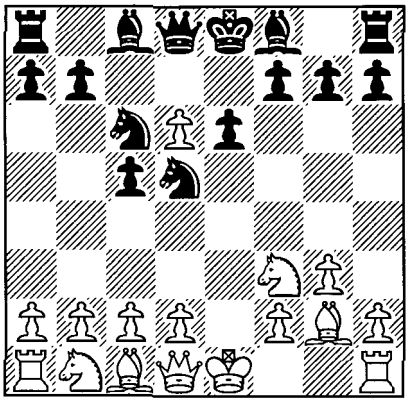
c21) 9...e5? is now too late and is a blunder: 10 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 11 g4 ♗g6 12 ♘xe5!.

c22) 9...e6 was tried in M.Narciso Dublan-J.Magem Badals, Lleida 2009, when again we should follow Emms suggestion of 10 ♖e1 ♗e7 11 ♘xd5 exd5 (11...♕xd5 12 g4 ♗g6 13 ♘e5 ♕d6 14 ♘xc6 bxc6 15 ♕f3

leaves White with the better of it) 12 d4! and Black won't be able to hold on to the extra pawn after 12...♗xf3 (or 12...cxd4 13 g4 ♗g6 14 ♘xd4 when White should be a little better thanks to the isolated d-pawn) 13 ♕xf3 ♘xd4 when I think 14 ♕d3 is easiest. Black's only try to hold on to d5 is 14...♖d8, but now 15 ♗g5 ♘e6 16 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 17 ♖e5 wins either d5 or b7.

c23) 9...♘xc3 10 bxc3 e5 11 ♖b1 0-0-0 12 ♕e2 ♕c7 13 ♕b5 f6 was V.Zaitsev-I.Dudukin, Serpukhov 2004, when instead of the crazy 14 d4!?, 14 d3 would have left White with a comfortable edge. Here White can also play very dynamically against 10...e6 with 11 ♖b1 ♕c7 (11...♖b8?! 12 d4! is very awkward to deal with, especially as 12...cxd4 13 ♗f4 e5 14 ♘xe5! ♗xd1 15 ♘xc6 forces Black to go into a lost endgame after 15...bxc6 16 ♖xb8+ ♕xb8 17 ♗xb8 ♗xc2 18 ♗xc6+ ♔d8 19 cxd4, as mentioned by Emms) 12 d4 ♖d8 13 ♕e2 cxd4 14 g4 d3 (14...♗g6 15 ♘xd4 and White's attack is too strong) 15 cxd3 ♗g6 16 ♘d4! ♘xd4 17 cxd4 ♕d6, as in A.Shabalov-L.Christiansen, Parsippany 1996, and here Shabalov should have taken on b7 with the rook, with an extra pawn and strong attacking chances.

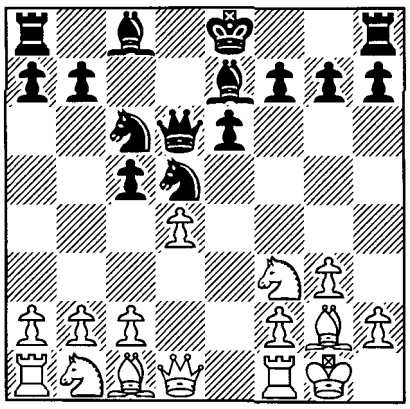
d) 7...e6 would transpose back to the game.



7 d4 ♕xd6

An unusual move order. Instead 7...♗xd6 might seem more logical, although this would force Black to suffer after 8 c4 ♘f6 9 dxc5 ♗xc5 10 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 11 ♘c3 ♔e7 12 0-0 ♖d8 (Y.Shabanov-D.Losev, Moscow 2007) when I like the idea of 13 a3, attempting to expand on the queenside. Again the g2-bishop tips the balance in White's favour.

8 0-0 ♗e7



9 dxc5

9 ♘c3! is a strong alternative. Following 9...♘xc3 10 bxc3 0-0 11 ♗f4 ♕d8 12 ♘e5 ♘xe5 13 ♗xe5 Black will have to suffer for a long time. In particular b7 isn't so easy to defend. Typically we're happy to exchange most of the other pieces to increase the strength of our g2-bishop.

9...♕xc5 10 ♘bd2 ♘f6 11 ♘b3 ♕b6

11...♕c4 looks risky, but wouldn't give White so much free time to develop. Perhaps White should continue with 12 c3 0-0 13 ♘bd4 ♘xd4 14 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 15 ♘xd4, swapping off into a very pleasant queenless middlegame.

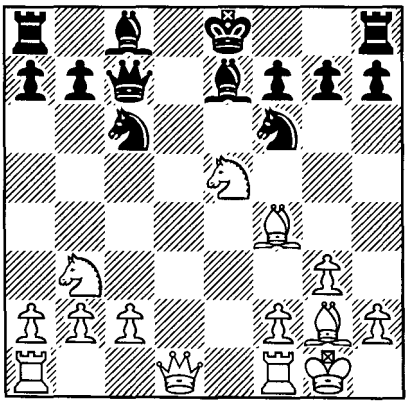
12 ♗e3 ♕c7 13 ♗f4

13 ♘fd4!? would be a more positional path.

13...e5

13...♕b6 14 ♕e2 0-0 15 ♖fd1 ♗d7 16 c4 leaves White with a very straightforward advantage, but the game puts Black under a lot of pressure.

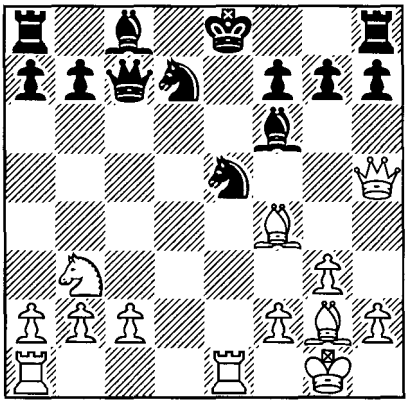
14 ♘xe5!



Despite being a great positional player, Rozentalis doesn't miss this tactical opportunity. The pins on the king and queen mean that Black won't be able to retain his extra piece.

14...♘xe5 15 ♖e1 ♘fd7 16 ♕h5 ♗f6

16...♗d6 17 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 18 f4 g6 19 ♕g5 0-0 20 fxe5 ♗e7 21 ♕d2 would let White keep his extra pawn. Black has some compensation here, but White should stand a little better.



17 ♗xe5?!

This wins back the piece but loses the advantage. Instead White should have used both bishops with 17 ♗h3! 0-0 18 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 19 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♕xe5 ♕xc2 21 ♖ac1 ♕g6 22 ♕c7 ♗c6 23 ♘d4 when his activity gives him the edge.

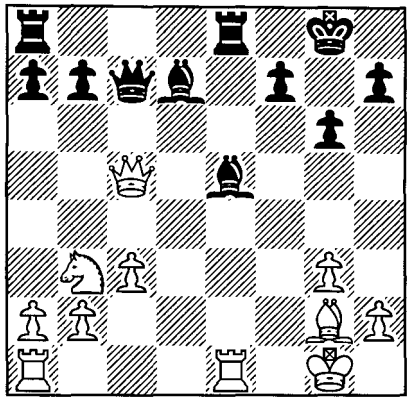
17...♘xe5 18 f4 0-0 19 fxe5 g6! 20 ♕e2 ♖e8 21 ♕f2 ♗xe5 22 c3

So after a fairly forced line, we're back to material parity. Black has the bishop-pair but our play against the queenside means White's position is easier to play. Rozentalis outplays Landenbergue over the next few moves to build up an advantage once more.

22...♗d7

22...♗f5! looks to equalize as after 23 ♕c5 ♕xc5+ 24 ♘xc5 ♖ab8 25 ♘xb7 f6! Black will likely regain his material while his bishops control a lot of important squares.

23 ♕c5!



23...♗c6 24 ♖ad1 ♖ac8

I'm going to take the liberty at guessing this was the move. Black needs to sit tight. 24...♖ad8? is the move inputted into ChessBase, but this simply loses a piece to 25 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 26 ♖xe5 ♕d1+ 27 ♗f1 ♖xe5 28 ♕xe5 ♕f3 29 ♘d2 ♕h1+ 30 ♔f2 ♕xh2+ 31 ♔e1.

25 ♗xc6 bxc6 26 ♔g2 ♖e6 27 ♕c4

Vacating the c5-square for the knight. Black is under unpleasant pressure now and Rozentalis is one of the best in the world at converting this type of advantage.

27...♖ce8 28 ♘c5 ♖6e7 29 a4 ♗g7 30 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 31 ♘a6 ♕e5 32 ♖f1 ♖e6

32...♕d5+ is the computer's suggestion, but this condemns Black to a dismal task of defending the endgame after 33 ♕xd5 cxd5 34 ♘b4 d4 35 c4.

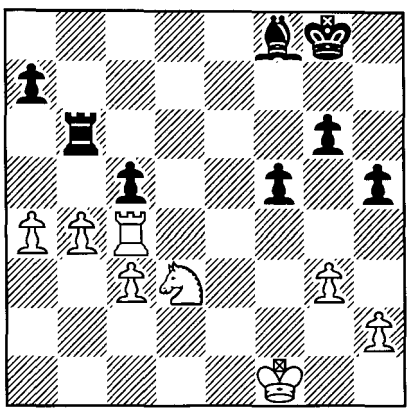
33 ♘b4 h5 34 ♕f4 ♕xf4 35 ♖xf4

The queen exchange will make it easier to target the isolated queenside pawns. Objectively this position probably should be a draw, but it's certainly not an easy task.

35...♗f8

35...c5 36 ♘d3 ♗h6, playing for activity, is a better bet.

36 ♔f1 f5 37 ♖c4 c5 38 ♘d3 ♖b6 39 b4!



The queenside pawns will prove decisive. Already I think it is too late to save the game for Black.

39...cxb4 40 cxb4 ♗d6 41 a5 ♖b7 42 ♖d4 ♗e7 43 a6! ♖c7 44 b5

Now a rook exchange will be hopeless for Black as b5-b6 and a6-a7 is too strong a threat.

44...♔f7 45 ♘e5+ ♔e6

45...♔f6 46 ♖c4! is already completely lost for Black: 46...♗d6 47 b6! ♖h7 48 ♘c6 axb6 49 a7 ♖h8 50 ♖d4! ♗c7 (or 50...♔e6 51 ♘b8! ♖xb8 52 ♖xd6+) 51 ♖d8! and the a-pawn queens. Thus Black is forced to give up a pawn.

46 ♘xg6 ♗d6 47 ♘f4+ ♔d7 48 ♖d5 ♖c5

Black must have known this was akin to resigning.

49 ♖xc5 ♗xc5 50 ♔e2 ♗g1 51 ♔d3 ♔c7 52 h4 1-0

Game 78
V.Anand-E.Bacrot
Bastia (rapid) 2004

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 b6

This is Black's most-played response out of all the 2nd moves we're yet to consider. The French Grandmaster Christian Bauer has tried it quite often, but it is rather committal, particularly as ...a6, then ...b5 is played in most Open Sicilian structures, while here the b-pawn prevents any ...♕d8-b6 or ...♕d8-a5 ideas. In response, I've decided we should follow Anand's example.

Other bizarre tries:

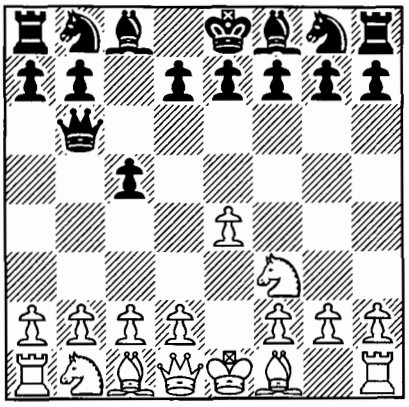
a) 2...♕c7!? sees Black play a waiting move which he hopes will come in handy once White shows his hand. Here 3 c3 makes sense when 3...♘f6 4 e5 ♘d5 5 d4 cxd4 6 ♘a3! ♘c6 (6...♘xc3? 7 ♕xd4 ♘xa2 8 ♘b5 wins material) 7 ♘b5 ♕b8 8 cxd4 is a little better for White.

b) 2...♕a5 is a strange queen move. I think the idea is to prevent White playing d2-d4, but we can play our typical KIA type ideas while keeping open the idea of opening up the position: 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 0-0 ♘c6 6 c3 d6 7 ♘a3!? ♘f6 8 ♖e1 0-0 9 h3 d5 10 e5 ♘e8 11 ♘c2 ♘c7 12 d4 cxd4 13 ♘cxd4! ♘xd4 14 ♘xd4 left White with a comfortable KIA position in N.Short-I.Nogueira, Sao Paulo (simul) 2001.

c) 2...d5 looks like a very poor version of the Centre-Counter as ♘f3 is far more useful than ...c5. The pawn normally moves to c6 in those structures anyway. Kasparov continued 3 exd5 ♕xd5 4 ♘c3 ♕d8 5 d4 cxd4 6 ♘xd4 (6 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 7 ♘xd4 also leaves Black with problems defending his b5-, d5- and c7-squares) 6...♘f6 7 ♗f4 e6 8 ♘db5! ♘a6 9 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 10 0-0-0+ ♗d7 11 ♗e2 ♗b4 12 ♗f3 and White's pressure was already decisive in G.Kasparov-S.Ferreira, Lisbon (simul) 1999.

d) 2...e5? has also been tried a few times, but after the straightforward 3 ♘xe5 ♕e7 4 d4 Black has issues reclaiming his pawn, as 4...d6 5 ♗b5+ ♘d7 (or 5...♔d8 6 ♘f3 ♕xe4+ 7 ♗e2 when the opening has obviously been a disaster for Black) 6 ♘xd7 ♕xe4+ 7 ♗e3 ♗xd7 8 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 9 0-0 gives White a great attack.

e) 2...♕b6 is another queen move hoping to transpose to an Open Sicilian where the queen belongs on b6 and White might be disorientated:



e1) I think we should simply go for 3 g3 as the queen never wants to be on b6 in the King's Indian Attack. One grandmaster game continued 3...g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 0-0 e6 6 ♘a3! (Karlsson finds a way to play against Black's queen) 6...d5 (Black tries to prevent ♘a3-c4, but soon loses a pawn) 7 exd5 exd5 8 ♖e1+ ♗e6 9 ♘g5 ♘f6 10 ♘xe6 fxe6 11 ♗h3 0-0 12 ♖xe6 was excellent for White in L.Karlsson-P.Schiller, Jonkoping 1988.

e2) 3 ♘c3!? is also possible. Black has normally responded 3...♘c6 when 4 ♗b5 transposes to 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♕b6 4 ♘c3, as covered in Berkes-Hera in Chapter Eight. Here 3...e6 has also been tried, but 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♕xd4! ♕a5 (if 5...♗c5? 6 ♕xg7 or 5...♕xd4 6 ♘xd4 a6 7 ♘a4! which leaves Black with some holes) 6 ♕e5 ♕d8 7 ♕g3! leaves White with a great Open Sicilian position as he has gained a lot of tempi. The queen is very useful on g3 preventing Black from developing his f8 bishop, T.Nabaty-B.Kantsler, Petah Tiqwa 2007.

f) 2...f5? has surprisingly been played by the Greek Grandmaster Banikas, but 3 exf5 ♘f6 4 d4 d5 5 ♗b5+ ♘c6 6 0-0 ♗xf5 7 dxc5 e6 (V.Kotrotsos-V.Parginos, Athens 2005) 8 ♘d4 is just terrible for Black. A sample line might continue 8...♕d7 9 ♖e1 ♗e7 10 c4 dxc4 11 ♘c3 ♗g4 12 ♘xc6! bxc6 (12...♗xd1 13 ♘xe7 wins a piece) 13 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 14 ♗xc4 ♗xc5 15 h3 ♗f5 16 g4 which leaves Black a pawn down and White with the initiative.

g) 2...♘a6?! is good for White so long as we don't get provoked into taking the knight: 3 ♘c3 d6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♕xd4 sees White exploit the fact that the queen can't be driven away when the knight on a6 looks decidedly out of place.

h) 2...h6!? looks completely ridiculous, but I saw an article trying to advocate it written by Stefan Bücker. I think the easiest response is 3 ♘c3 d6 (3...g5?! was Bücker's original idea, but he admits that 4 d4 g4 5 ♘e5 cxd4 6 ♗c4 e6 7 ♕xd4 is practically winning) 4 ♗b5+!? when ...h6 looks rather out of place.

Finally, we return to 2...b6:

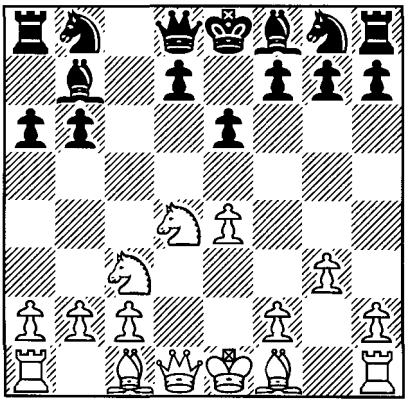
3 ♘c3

Again it would be possible to play in King's Indian Attack spirit with 3 g3 ♗b7 4 d3 when in all probability the position will transpose to one already covered in Chapters Nine and Ten.

3...♗b7 4 d4 cxd4

4...e6 5 d5!, blocking in the b7-bishop looks very comfortable: 5...♘f6 6 ♗c4 exd5 7 exd5 d6 8 0-0 ♗e7 was P.Blatny-B.Carlier, Budapest 1991, when 9 ♘h4! 0-0 10 ♘f5 leaves White with a clear advantage.

5 ♘xd4 a6 6 g3 e6

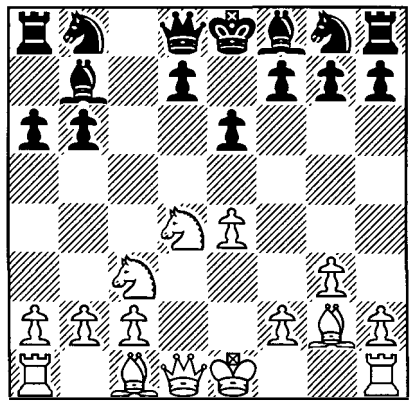


Black is going for a Hedgehog structure so the move order isn't so relevant. Meanwhile our plan is ♗f1-g2, 0-0 and f2-f4 to start putting pressure on Black. Here practice has also seen:

a) 6...d6 7 ♗g2 ♘d7 8 0-0 e6 9 ♖e1 ♗e7 10 ♗e3 ♖c8 11 f4 is very similar to the game, but here Black has a few problems as he cannot develop his king's knight: 11...♘c5 (11...♘gf6?! 12 e5! is very awkward) 12 ♘b3 ♕c7 13 ♘xc5 bxc5 (or 13...dxc5, as in D.Breder-S.Conquest, Reykjavik 2009, and here the simple 15 fxe6 fxe6 16 ♗h3 ♕d7 17 ♗f4 leaves Black under a lot of pressure) 14 f5! ♘f6 (14...e5 is really not a move Black wants to play and 15 ♘d5 ♗xd5 16 exd5 ♘f6 17 c4 leaves White with a risk-free edge) 14 ♕e2 leaves White with the upper hand as 14...♘f6 15 ♖ad1 0-0 16 e5 ♘d7 17 ♘e4 is somewhat unpleasant.

b) 6...g6 is an alternative development plan, transposing into a kind of Dragon, but here Black usually strives for ...b7-b5 not the more passive ...b6. Following 7 ♗g2 ♗g7 8 0-0 d6 9 ♗e3 ♘d7 10 f4 ♖c8, rather than 11 a4 allowing Black his typical exchange sacrifice with 11...♖xc3!? in J.Koch-L.Guidarelli, French League 2010, I'd go for 11 ♕e2 when 11...♖xc3 12 bxc3 ♕a8 isn't so convincing as White can defend with 13 ♗d2.

7 ♗g2



7...♕c7

Instead 7...d6 8 0-0 ♘d7 9 f4 is likely to transpose.

7...♗b4 is an independent option, but it appears that the fight for the dark squares is much more important than the doubled c-pawns: 8 0-0 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 ♘e7 10 ♗a3 0-0 11 ♖b1 ♖e8 12 c4 ♕c7 13 ♕d3 d6 14 ♖fd1 ♘c8 15 ♘f3 ♕c6 was J.Toledano Llinares-J.Bellon Lopez, Cala Galdana 1999, when White could have simply won a pawn with 16 ♗xd6 as 16...♕xe4 17 ♕c3! (threatening 18 ♘e1) 17...♘c6 18 c5 b5 19 ♘e5! wins material.

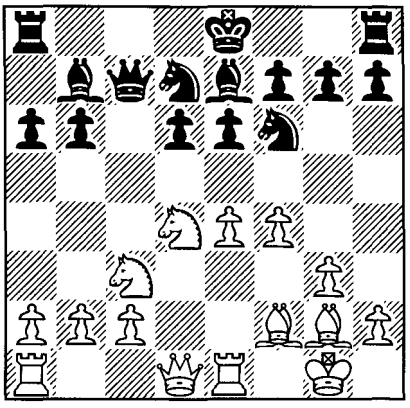
8 0-0 d6 9 f4 ♘d7 10 ♗e3 ♘gf6 11 ♖e1

Preparing to defend e4 and with ideas of pushing e4-e5, as we'll see in the game.

11...♗e7

Black could try 11...h5, with the idea of ...♘f6-g4, but we should respond with 12 h3. Black now has the issue that he has no safe haven for his king. He can try for the initiative with 12...b5 13 a3 ♘b6, but following 14 ♕e2 ♖c8 15 ♖ad1 ♘c4 16 ♗c1 he has no way further to make progress and White can slowly push him back with b2-b3 followed by ♗c1-b2, with pleasant control of the position. Black would also have to watch out for ♘c3-d5 ideas opening up his king.

12 ♗f2



This is a typical set-up and easy to remember. The bishops adequately protect White's king, while the f4- and e4-pawns are very useful controlling the central squares. Black's position is actually more perilous than it appears.

12...♘c5

12...0-0 should be preferred, although White has a couple of interesting options here:

a) 13 g4 is possible, with the aim of taking squares away from Black's minor pieces.

b) 13 a4, preventing ...b6-b5, also looks sensible.

c) 13 e5!? is the most dynamic try, but 13...dxe5 14 fxe5 ♘d5 15 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 16 ♗xd5 exd5 17 ♘f5 ♗c5 18 ♗xc5 ♕xc5+ 19 ♔h1 looks fairly level.

d) 13 ♕e2! and it's not so easy to see how Black makes any progress, since 13...b5 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♘d5 16 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 17 ♗xd5 exd5 18 ♘f5 ♗c5 19 ♗xc5 ♕xc5+ 20 ♔h1 now looks fairly promising as 20...g6 (20...♖ae8 can be dealt with by 21 ♘xg7!) 21 e6! is strong.

13 e5! dxe5 14 ♗xb7 ♘xb7

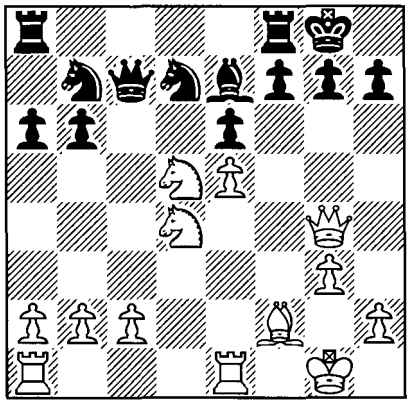
This move looks rather strange, but Bacrot wants to keep pressure on the e5-square.

14...♕xb7 15 fxe5 ♘d5 16 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 would leave White a choice between attacking on the kingside with 17 ♕g4 or 17 ♕f3!? ♕xf3 18 ♘xf3, leaving him with a safe advantage in the endgame as he can use his queenside majority, while the e5-pawn continues to tie Black down.

15 fxe5 ♘d7 16 ♕g4 0-0?

This loses the game to White's knights. 16...g6 was necessary, although White retains good attacking chances after 17 ♖ad1 b5 18 ♗e3! ♘xe5?! 19 ♕e4 ♖d8 20 ♗f4.

17 ♘d5!



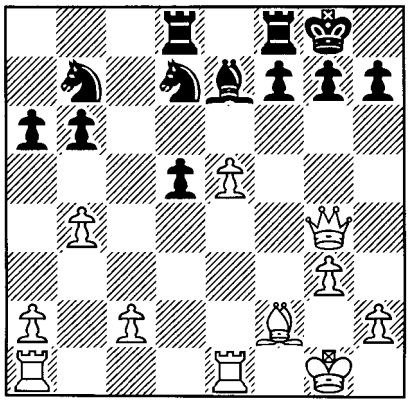
17...♕d8

Neither 17...exd5 18 ♘f5 g6 19 ♘xe7+ ♔h8 20 ♘xd5 ♕c6 21 ♕d4 nor 17...♘xe5 18 ♘xe6! ♘xg4 19 ♘exc7 would save Black.

18 ♘c6!

Black is forced to give up his queen and I'm pretty sure if this hadn't been a rapid game he would have resigned at this point.

18...exd5 19 ♘xd8 ♖axd8 20 b4!



A pretty move. All of Black's minor pieces were hoping to use the c5-square and now they, the b7-knight in particular, are completely out of the game.

20...♖fe8 21 e6! ♘f6 22 exf7+ ♔xf7 23 ♕e6+ ♔f8 24 ♕xb6 ♘d6 25 ♗c5 ♘fe4 26 ♖xe4!?

Simplifying with a huge material advantage.

26...♘xe4 27 ♗xe7+

27 ♖f1+! ♘f6 (27...♔g8 28 ♗xe7) 28 ♖xf6+ gxf6 29 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 30 ♗xe7 was a slightly more accurate finish.

27...♔xe7 28 ♖e1 ♖d6 29 ♕d4 ♔f7 30 c4 1-0

Conclusion

This chapter has tied up all the loose ends in our repertoire. The most critical and common continuations in this chapter are 2...a6 and 2...g6, as seen in Games 75 and 76. I have played both lines myself and consider them reasonably sound. However, I like the look of the interesting pawn sacrifice 3 b4!? in Game 75, while 3 ♗c4 causes Black immediate difficulties in Game 76.

I hope you are now ready to play against the Sicilian with confidence and I wish you all the best in your games with 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3.

Index of Variations

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 and now:

A: 2...d6
B: 2...♘c6
C: 2...Others

A) 2...d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7
3...♘d7 4 d4
4...a6 – *23*
4...♘f6 5 0-0
5...♘xe4 – *25*
5...a6 – *27*
4...cxd4 5 ♕xd4
5...e5 – *17*
5...e6 – *19*
5...a6 6 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7
7 c4 – *9*
7 0-0 – *13*
5...♘f6 6 0-0
6...a6 – *31*
6...g6 – *35*
6...e5 – *37*
3...♘c6 4 ♗xc6+ bxc6 5 0-0
5...♗g4 – *112*
5...g6 – *116*
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5...e5 6 c3
6...g5 – *108*
6...♘f6 7 ♖e1
7...♗g4 – *91*
7...♗e7 – *97*
6...f5 7 exf5 ♗xf5 8 d4
8...e4 – *100*

8...cxd4 – *103*

4 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7

4...♘xd7 5 0-0 ♘gf6 6 ♕e2

6...g6 – *83*

6...♖c8 – *86*

7 b3

7...g6 – *80*

7...♗e7 8 ♗b2 0-0 9 c4

9...e5 – *73*

9...♖e8 – *77*

9...a6 10 d4 cxd4 11 ♘xd4 ♖c8 12 ♘c3 ♕a5 13 ♖ad1 ♖fe8

14 ♕d2 – *65*

14 ♔h1 – *70*

5 0-0 ♘f6

5...♘c6 6 ♕e2 g6 – *60*

6 ♕e2 ♘c6 7 ♖d1 g6

7...e6 – *43*

7...g5 – *51*

7...♕g4 – *55*

7...e5 – *57*

8 c3 ♗g7 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4

10...d5 – *47*

10...0-0 – *49*

B) 2...♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6

3...d6 – *2...d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘c6*

3...♕b6 – *213*

3....♕c7 – *213*

3...♘a5 – *219*

3...♘d4 – *224*

3...e5 – *228*

3...a6 – *233*

3...♘f6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 d3

5...g6 6 h3 ♗g7 – *3...g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 d3 ♗g7 6 h3 ♘f6*

5...♗g4 – *204*

5...♘d7 – *209*

3...e6 4 ♗xc6

4...dxc6 – *198*

4...bxc6 5 b3

5...♘e7 – *180*

5...f6 – *185*

5...d5 – *189*

5...d6 – *192*

5...♕f6 – *194*

4 ♗xc6 dxc6

4...bxc6 5 0-0 ♗g7 6 ♖e1

6...e5 – *123*

6...♘f6 – *127*

6...d6 – *141*

6...♘h6 7 c3 0-0 8 d4 cxd4 9 cxd4 f6

10 b3 – *130*

10 ♘c3 – *134*

5 d3 ♗g7

5...♗g4 – *175*

6 h3 ♘f6

6...b6 – *167*

6...e5 – *172*

7 ♘c3 0-0

7...♘d7 8 ♗e3 e5 9 ♕d2

9...h6 – *158*

9...♕e7 – *162*

8 ♗e3 b6 9 ♕d2

9...e5 – *147*

9...♖e8 – *151*

9...♘e8 – *154*

C) 2...e6

2...a6 – *325*

2...g6 – *330*

2...♘f6 – *335*

2...b6 – *340*

3 d3 d5

3...♘c6 4 g3

4...d6 – *315*

4...♗d6 – *319*

4...♘ge7 5 g3 g6 6 ♗g2 ♗g7 7 c3

7...0-0 – *303*

7...e5 – *311*

4...g6 5 ♗g5

5...♕c7 – *297*

5...f6 – *301*

5...♕b6 6 ♘bd2 ♕xb2 7 ♘c4 ♕g7 8 ♖b1

8...d6 – *287*

8....d5 – *292*

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4...♘c6 5 g3

5...b6 – *264*
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5 g3 ♗e7
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6 ♗g2 ♘c6 7 0-0 0-0
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how to beat the Sicilian defence

The Sicilian Defence is by far the most popular chess opening. If you play 1 e4 as White, on average you are likely to meet the Sicilian in virtually every other game! You need to be prepared to face the Sicilian at all times, and a ready-to-use repertoire against it is an indispensible weapon.

In this book, Gawain Jones confronts the challenge of meeting the Sicilian head on. He has constructed a comprehensive Anti-Sicilian repertoire for White, which is based on lines that are successfully employed at grandmaster level. These are sound, reliable options for White, but don't be fooled – they also contain more than a drop of poison. Variations covered include the popular King's Indian Attack, various Bb5 systems and weapons against Black's offbeat tries.

- A Grandmaster's repertoire against the Sicilian
- Packed with new ideas and critical analysis
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Gawain Jones is a Grandmaster and one of the UK's leading players. He's a regular in the England national team and was their most successful performer at the 2010 Chess Olympiad. He was awarded the individual silver medal playing top board at the 2006 European Club Championship.

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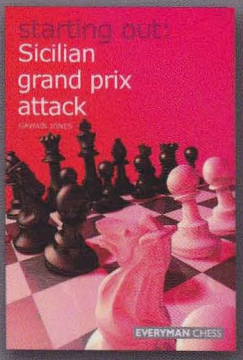

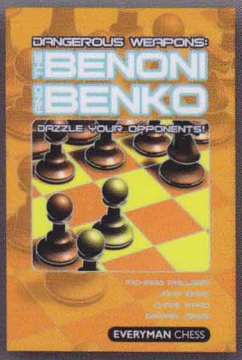

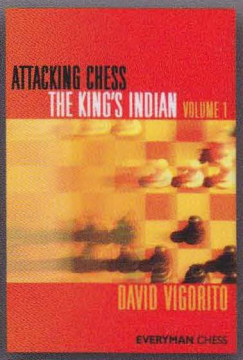

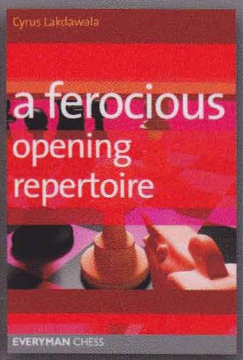

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